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WAR IN UKRAINE AND CHESS:

- Reactions to the FIDE ban on Sergey Krajakin
- Alexander Beliavsky:
  A chess game where one side threatens a nuclear move
- The Belgrade Grand Prix: Playing under the shadow of war
- Peter O'Brien: Dimensions of conflict

WHEN
SPORTS AND
POLITICS MIX:

IS IT RIGHT TO BAN PLAYERS OVER THEIR PERSONAL POLITICAL VIEWS OR ACTS BY THEIR GOVERNMENT?

SAMUEL RESHEVSKY: **CHESS IS ANOTHER SOVIET GAMBIT**

IMPRESSUM

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Chairman Shaun Taulbut
Director Stephen Lowe

Editors
Milan Dinic and Shaun Taulbut

Photo editor
David Llada

Prepress Specialist
Milica Mitic

Photography
Mark Livshitz, David Llada,
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BCM archive, Wikipedia

Advertising
Stephen Lowe

Enquiries
editor@britishchessmagazine.co.uk

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Postal correspondence:
Albany House, 14 Shute End
Wokingham, Berkshire RG40 1BJ

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FIDE BANS SERGEY KARJAKIN OVER HIS UKRAINE COMMENTS

THE FIDE ETHICS COMMISSION HAS IMPOSED A SIX-MONTH BAN ON FORMER WORLD CHAMPION CANDIDATE

By Milan Dinic

On 21st March the FIDE Ethics and Disciplinary Commission (EDC) reached a verdict on the case relating to public statements by grandmasters Sergey Karjakin and Sergei Shipov.

The 32-year-old Karjakin, who challenged Magnus Carlsen for the world title in 2016, has defended his country's actions on social media in recent weeks, drawing intense criticism from the chess world.

The three-member EDC panel unanimously found Sergey Karjakin guilty of a breach of article 2.2.10 of the FIDE Code of Ethics, and sanctioned him to 'a worldwide ban of six months from participating as a player in any FIDE-rated chess competition, taking effect from the date of this decision, 21 March 2022'. This means that Karjakin will not be able to take part in the Candidates tournament in June and July in Madrid.

Grandmaster Sergei Shipov was found not guilty of a breach of article 2.2.10 of the FIDE Code of Ethics.

WHAT DID FIDE SAY IN ITS DECISION?

The FIDE Ethics commission found that the statements by Sergey Karjakin on the ongoing military conflict in Ukraine have led to 'a considerable number of reactions on social media and elsewhere, to a large extent negative towards the opinions expressed by Sergey Karjakin'.

'A necessary condition for the establishment of guilt is that the statements have reached the public domain. This concept, with respect to disrepute clauses in sport, is not the world at large but the sport in which the accused engages, such as chess. Information concerning the accused's conduct which is not published in the media, but which can be learnt without a great deal of labour by persons engaged in the chess world or a relevant part of it, will be in the public domain and satisfy the public exposure element. The EDC Chamber is comfortably satisfied that this condition is fulfilled in this case.'

‘The EDC Chamber finds, against the background given above, on the standard of comfortable satisfaction that the statements of Sergey Karjakin, which, by his own choice and presentation, can be connected to the game of chess, damage the reputation of the game of chess and/or FIDE. The likelihood that these statements will damage the reputation of Sergey Karjakin personally is also considerable’, it concludes.

The Chamber explains its decision not to sanction Sergei Shipov with the following argument: ‘In comparison with Sergey Karjakin, Sergei Shipov is considerably less known and has, therefore, a less powerful platform. The statements made by Sergei Shipov are also of a slightly different and less provocative character than the ones made by Karjakin. In an overall evaluation of the potential negative impact on the game of chess and/or FIDE, the EDC Chamber is not sufficiently convinced that Sergei Shipov’s statements qualify as a breach of article 2.2.10.’

WHAT WAS IT THAT KARJAKIN SAID?

The EDC document refers to the statements made by Sergey Karjakin.

‘On his Twitter-account, Mr Karjakin has published a letter of support to Russia’s President Vladimir Putin and Russia’s ‘special operation’. The letter contains among other things allegations against the Ukrainian government for genocide and for putting the security of all of Europe at risk. Karjakin encourages the operation against Ukraine in hope that this will lead to ‘demilitarization and denazification of Ukraine’. The referral also includes examples of other tweets by Karjakin, containing pictures of what is said to be Ukrainian soldiers holding a photo of Adolf Hitler and symbols of Nazism along with the statement from Karjakin: ‘This is Ukraine’. In additional tweets, Karjakin has referred to ‘the tragedy of Odessa’ [in 2014, when 48 people, mostly pro-Russian, died when a building they were in was set on fire and for which nobody has been sentenced yet - note, BCM] and claims that the Ukrainian authorities have protected the persons responsible for the tragedy. Sergey Karjakin also published a picture of himself wearing boxing gloves with a reference to ‘Russian Spring’.’

Before and since this decision, Karjakin has continued to post comments and videos supporting Russia’s actions in Ukraine.

Reaction to Karjakin’s ban

FIDE Official / Grand Prix

HIKARU NAKAMURA: ‘THIS IS A VERY DANGEROUS PRECEDENT’

In an interview during the third leg of the Grand Prix, in Berlin, grandmaster Hikaru Nakamura was asked about the decision of FIDE to ban Karjakin over his comments:

‘That’s a tough decision. I don’t agree with Sergey on a personal level. People are dying in Ukraine. At the same time - chess is chess. When you choose to cancel someone over their personal opinions it doesn’t sit right with me because it doesn’t have anything to do with the game itself.

Even though I don’t agree and I have strong opinions about what he said, I think it’s wrong to take away his spot or ban him over what he said. You should separate politics and chess.’

When asked whether FIDE’s decision might be reversed, Nakamura said: ‘Zero percent…’

‘This is a very dangerous precedent going forward’, noted Nakamura.

WHAT DID KARJAKIN SAY IN HIS DEFENCE?

According to FIDE, Sergey Karjakin has forwarded a brief submission on 8th March to FIDE with the following statement: ‘I can only say that I support my country and my President’.

HOW DID KARJAKIN RESPOND TO THE DECISION?

Karjakin himself initially stated that he would not appeal the decision, however, the Russian chess federation said they will contest the ruling.

Following FIDE’s decision, Sergey Karjakin released the following statement:

‘An expected, but no less shameful decision by FIDE. All selection criteria normally applied in sports have been trampled, the basic principle that sport is not mixed with politics has been trampled.

I went through the toughest selection through the World Cup to the Candidates Tournament. Winning it would take me to the world championship match. Alas, FIDE disgraced not me, but themselves. And now we can all be convinced that the international sports officials, who have been banning Russian Olympians in recent years with or without cause, have reached chess, which has always been far from this lawlessness.

And most importantly. First of all, I am a patriot of my country, and only secondly - an athlete. If my thoughts return to the situation when I supported the president of Russia, the people and the army, then I would have done exactly the same. I do not regret anything.

Thank you very much to my fans, from whom I receive support from all over the world! Life will surely put everything in its place.’

INTERVIEW:

Alexander Grischuk on the impact the war in Ukraine has on chess

‘I CANNOT SUPPORT A BAN ON PLAYERS COMING FROM RUSSIA’

During the second leg of the Grand Prix tournament, held in Belgrade (Serbia) in the first part of March, BCM editor Milan Dinic interviewed Alexander Grischuk on how the events in Ukraine are affecting chess and what he thinks about barring Russian players from sports events. The interview was conducted on the 7th of March. That evening, Girschuk flew back to Moscow.

BCM: This tournament is played under strange circumstances, overshadowed by global events. For you personally, what was it like to play under that shadow?

Alexander Grischuk: You can see with my play. My play speaks for itself.

BCM: Did you spend more time preparing for the games Are following the news?

A.G: Today [referring to his final game, against Sam Shankland, where he drew as White - note, BCM] is the first game I spent more than half an hour preparing for.

BCM: And what did you do the rest of the time?

A.G: I just followed the news. For the first days, I didn’t care at all about the tournament. Today was the first time I had the desire to win.

WORLD CHESS GRAND PRIX SERIES 2022
BELGRADE, SERBIA, FEBRUARY 28 – MARCH 14
15:46:54
СРБИЈЕ

BCM: Are you going straight to Moscow from Belgrade?

A.G: Yes, sure.

BCM: What do you expect to see when you get there?

A.G: I have a late flight. I am a bit relieved that my game didn't last too long so I have no problem catching the flight.

BCM: When you left Russia to come to Belgrade, global circumstances were different. A lot has happened in the past ten days. What do you expect awaits you back in Moscow, what kind of an atmosphere?

A.G: I think this is just the beginning of changes in the world. What has started will have a very global effect on the whole world. I think that, at the moment, there won't be much of a difference in Moscow. However, in a few months or a couple of years, a lot of the world will be very different from now. It's impossible to predict in which way it will change.

BCM: In terms of chess, how does this whole thing affect the chess world? Russia and Ukraine are like Spain and Portugal in football.

A.G: I'm not sure about the chess world but it has affected Russian sports dramatically. At the moment, chess players can participate in tournaments. But in some sports, they have already been banned. Anything might change at any moment.

BCM: There have been calls to ban Russian players from sports. What do you think about that?

A.G: This I cannot support of course, not just because I am Russian. I understand if this call is coming from the Ukrainian people. This is totally understandable. However, when it comes from someone else I cannot really support it under any circumstances.

BCM: Do you think it's appropriate that Russian players play under the FIDE flag, or do you think you should play under the Russian flag or the flag of the Russian chess federation?

A.G: I started playing under the flag of the Russian chess federation and I didn't want to change it. It was the decision of FIDE.

BCM: Regardless of what happens, are you still determined to play for Russia?

A.G: Yes. I am not going to move. I'm definitely not going to change federation.

BCM: What are your immediate plans in light of these circumstances, if you have any?

A.G: To come back home. In a difficult time you should dedicate yourself to helping your kids, your wife, parents, family, friends. I will try to do it as much as I good as I can.

WHEN SPORTS AND POLITICS MIX:

Is it right to ban players over their personal political views or acts by their government?

As Russia launched its invasion of Ukraine, chess players were quick to voice their opinions, which we reported in the March issue of BCM. Most players condemned Russia, while a few supported it. There have been calls to ban Russian players from participating in international events, to cut all ties with Russian sponsors, and to replace the current Russian-led leadership of the International chess federation, FIDE.

The governing body of chess has reacted by axing ties with Russian state sponsors, moving all events away from Russia and Belarus (including the chess Olympiad which has been moved from Russia to India), and banning players of these two countries from playing under their national insignia. FIDE has, however, stopped short of banning Russian and Belarussian players from participating in its events. The only exception - at the time of writing this article, 28th March 2022- is Sergey Karjakin, who has been banned for six months over his social media comments in which he has publicly supported Russia's actions.

The question which has been much debated in the chess community recently is - should Russian players be banned from chess events altogether?

The IOC has already decided that Russian and Belarusian athletes should be excluded from international competitions, and FIFA has taken the same decisive decision. Some say that the chess world governing body should follow suit.

The arguments in favour of banning Russian players (and Belarussian, whose country is seen as aiding Russia's assault on Ukraine) follow similar justification as those underpinning the imposition of economic and other sanctions on these countries. By very publicly and decisively isolating and sanctioning them, the people in those countries will be directly affected and thus more likely to become aware of the hostile actions of their government and to object to them by direct political action. Vice versa, the governments of these countries will see and feel the immediate consequences of sanctions on their economies and citizens and so will be more likely to reverse the policies giving rise to them.

DO SANCTIONS WORK?

However, there is a big question as to whether sanctions work in the first place. A 2009 study by the Washington based Peterson Institute for International Economics analysed 170 cases of sanctions imposed since World War One and found that only one-third of them succeeded in their goals. Another study, from 1997, estimates the success rate of sanctions on regimes to be below five per cent. Clearly, the depth and severity of sanction regimes in the past, combined with the preparedness of friendly states to help circumvent them, are widely seen as inadequate to be an effective deterrent or to incentivise governments to change course.

As someone who grew up in a country under sanctions (Yugoslavia in the 1990s), I know very well what that means, and I also know that none of the people targeted by the sanctions (the government and political elite) were affected in any meaningful way. In fact, anecdotal evidence suggests that they continued to have access to foreign assets and sources of supply, and may even have profited from sanctions by providing goods that were otherwise unavailable to other citizens and businesses.

There are questions often asked by those who are not sure in the efficacy of sanctions. If Russian and Belarussian players are banned, will that help stop Russia's war in Ukraine and will the suffering of the Ukrainian people be reduced?

These questions are of course perfectly valid, and the honest answer to them is probably in the negative. Further, there is a concern that if Russian and Belarussian players are banned from participating in chess events this could mean that they will be more isolated inside their home countries and will thereby be denied access not only to views which differ from what their state is telling to them but also to opportunities to make a living - all of which it is argued might only serve to make them personally more susceptible to and dependent upon state influence and support.

BANNING INDIVIDUAL PLAYERS

There are also broader reasons to doubt whether banning individual players for their views on matters unrelated to chess is the right thing to do, and to ask whether the chess community is and has been consistent in its attitude to views widely held to be questionable or objectionable. Sergey Karjakin has been banned for six months because of his open support for the Russian invasion, and there are calls to ban him from major events indefinitely and even to remove him from chess altogether. There is a real problem of consistency here and we should be honest: a quick glance at social media posts shows that there are many well-known chess professionals whose social and political views are highly questionable from a factual and ethical standpoint.

Karjakin and Russian players in general are not the only ones where the question arises as to whether they should be banned because of their personal views or the actions of their governments. Should Chinese players be banned for China's treatment of the Uyghurs? Should US players have been banned because of the treatment of Black people in America? What about Israel and the treatment of Palestinians? Or should Iranian players be banned because of the policy of their leaders towards Israel? The past is also full of similar contradictions. What about Bobby Fischer, who was openly antisemitic? Should we ban his games? Should Alexander Alekhine, Paul Keres or Efim Bogoljubow be removed from chess history because they participated in tournaments in Nazi Germany?

It is inevitably correct to say that, far from solving real and acute problems in the world, banning chess players because of their political views and/or actions of their governments is likely to create new issues and highlight inconsistencies and contradictions in current and historical behaviour and attitudes. Hikaru Nakamura put it well when - speaking about banning Karjakin - he said that it's 'a dangerous precedent' and that we should 'separate politics from chess'. This argument is of course the familiar one made by the sporting community as it seeks to distance itself from harsh and often brutal political realities - as is the somewhat more subtle claim that continuing sporting links with brutal regimes is actually one means of changing or at least influencing those regimes and the policies they pursue.

ALEXANDER BELIAVSKY: A CHESS GAME WHERE ONE SIDE THREATENS A NUCLEAR MOVE

In the March issue of BCM we interviewed Alexander Beliavsky. The interview was conducted just before the Russian invasion of Ukraine started.

Beliavsky sent us a message from Terme Catez in Slovenia, where he is taking part in the European individual chess championship:

– My comparison in the March 2022 issue of BCM with chess and the situation in Ukraine being such that one side cannot make any moves, was generally correct. Still I would like to make it even more correct.

The situation is similar to a chess game where you cannot take the opponent's pieces on his territory. For instance after 1.e4 and Black plays d5 and you cannot take on d5, because if you do so it is a good reason for him to use a nuclear weapon. So you are playing 2.d3. Now he is playing f5 and you have to play ♕e2 or ♘d2. It is clear, under such a rule even a novice will probably beat a GM.

Nevertheless the Ukrainian army is doing extremely well and I hope with supplies from GB and USA will succeed in expelling the Russian army behind the Ukrainian borders. Unfortunately devastation and human price are enormous.

IT'S RUSSIA'S CHOICE

'Moral outrage' has become a powerful force for good in the world in recent years and the technological ease of communicating, amplifying and organising such outrage is undoubtedly rapidly changing attitudes and behaviour. This new reality is daily present in our lives - look no further than to the Me Too, Black Lives Matter, Gilets Jaunes and climate change movements for recent examples. Such movements have a clear and direct link with the moral and political leadership of figures such as Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King and Mahatma Gandhi - wisdom and goodness voiced itself effectively and fearlessly leading to mass action by citizens which ultimately brought an end to state sponsored violence.

No one is too small to make a difference. FIDE and the wider chess community clearly have a role to play, and have already joined the almost universal condemnation of Russia. To its credit FIDE has taken important steps to align with the moral outrage felt by so many. Sooner or later I believe that the current Russian leadership will realise that the call to peace implicit in the FIDE motto Gens Una Sumus, and that respect for the lives and territorial integrity of its neighbours, will in the end better serve its own self-interest than the obliteration of the innocents in Ukraine, the isolation of the Russian people, and the degradation of the Russian economy. How its leadership will then be judged will lie in the hands of the Russian people.

Milan Dinic, BCM Editor

THE SECOND LEG OF THE GRAND PRIX – BELGRADE, 1ST-14TH MARCH

PLAYING UNDER THE SHADOW OF WAR

THE TOURNAMENT IN BELGRADE WAS THE FIRST MAJOR CHESS EVENT SINCE THE START OF THE RUSSIAN INVASION OF UKRAINE

By Milan Dinic

The second leg of the Grand Prix - part of a series of three tournaments played between 4 February and 4 April with the top two finishers qualifying for the 2022 Candidates - took place in Belgrade, the capital of Serbia and once of Yugoslavia. This was supposed to be a celebration of chess, a grand return of a major event to a city and country which have been one of the leading chess centres during the second part of the 20th century.

For those who are less familiar with the importance of Belgrade and Yugoslavia for chess, here is a summary: After the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia was the country where chess was probably most popular, where players enjoyed the status of celebrities and were treated like royals. Until the country started to fall apart in 1990, Yugoslavia was second (behind the USSR) in the world in the number of medals won in chess Olympiads. There isn’t a single world champion or top player from the 1940s onwards who did not play in Yugoslavia, and the country was host to major tournaments and official chess competitions - many of which took place in Belgrade - save the match for the world champion (unless you include the 1992 Fischer-Spassky rematch).

The Grand Prix was, therefore, supposed to be a reminder of those glory days, and a sign of hope that the country will once again play host to chess stars.

However, just as the players started to gather in Belgrade, Russia launched its invasion of Ukraine. The mood in Belgrade had changed completely. The media devoted almost all of their coverage to the war while the public, as in many other parts of Europe, flocked to the shops to get supplies. The feeling of unease was partly amplified by the fact that Serbia has experienced war and conflict, and that people are concerned that the events in Ukraine might ricochet in the Balkans which have often been seen as a gunpowder keg of Europe.

I was involved in the event as the press officer on behalf of FIDE, but, being Serbian and having worked there as a journalist for years, I was also helping with the local media coverage. We could clearly see how other sections of the news - including sports - got cut because of Ukraine, meaning that the event would be overshadowed by other news.

Then the questions started to fly around: Will the event take place? If it starts - will it finish? Will the Russians be allowed to play? Will they be kicked out half-way? Will FIDE - which is led by Russians - manage to hold itself together? What if…?

But both FIDE and the local organisers - the Serbian chess federation (SCF) - kept their cool. The two main people in the organising team, SCF president Dragan Lazic and tournament director Marijan Stricevic (both experienced businessmen and managers with a proven record, showing that chess is maybe better run by business professionals than chess players), assisted by the efficient FIDE delegate Sava Stoisavljevic, made sure everything worked like clockwork. The organisers ensured that the players had the best playing conditions - from large apartments in one of Belgrade's best hotels, to providing all the assistance they required and securing a large, comfortable playing hall.

The last player to arrive was Dmitry Andreikin. Because of the ban on Russian companies flying over Europe, Andreikin had to travel from Moscow via St Petersburg and Istanbul and then to Belgrade, arriving on the day of the first round. Sadly, this was not the only problem Andreikin had when it came to flights: One night I returned very late from dinner at my parents' apartment, only to find Andreikin standing at 4 am in front of the Crowne Plaza hotel where the event was held, waiting for his wife and children who had just landed in Belgrade. They had had their flight delayed because of a bomb threat. (Serbia is the only European country not to impose sanctions on Russia so Air Serbia still operates flights to Moscow - note, BCM.) Unfortunately for Andreikin, this happened on the night before his first game in the finals, against Rapport.

It was obvious that the Russian players felt uncomfortable, and that their mind was not on the tournament. Then there was the broadcasting crew from Poland, preparing all the interviews and the technical/video setup, and they clearly had their own concerns, but - like everyone else - they also behaved very professionally and focused on the work.

As the tournament was about to begin, FIDE announced its decision not to allow Russian players to play under their flag or for their anthem to be performed. Instead, they would be playing under the flag of the Russian chess federation, but that was also later replaced with the flag of FIDE. Some, like Alexander Predke, immediately asked to play under the FIDE flag.

In the reports and interviews, we could not refer to the players as 'Russian', given FIDE's decisions. On the other hand, one of the tournament participants was looking to buy a T-shirt with a Ukrainian flag, but he later gave up on this idea.

More bad news continued to pour in, including calls to ban Russian players altogether from participating in events.

In private conversations, many of the players from Russia seemed dismayed with the news coming from Ukraine, saying they spent most of the time following the news. Discussions with some of them often left me feeling puzzled: one day some would argue that the Russians are fighting extremist nationalists in Ukraine, while the next day they would be very negative about Moscow. Following such conversations, I often had the words of Winston Churchill echoing in my head - describing Russia(ns) as 'a riddle, wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma.'

Despite all of this, everyone pulled through and the event carried on and finished, with the drama happening solely on the chessboard. Finally, it seemed that everyone felt a bit relieved when Andreikin lost to Hungarian Richard Rapport in the finals, as it would have been very awkward to have a winner from a country whose flag could not be shown and whose anthem could not be played.

Overall, looking at all of the players both before and after the games, their interaction and behaviour at mealtimes, it seemed they all pulled together, understanding each other, acting in the spirit of FIDE's motto - Gens Una Sumus.

THE SECOND LEG OF THE GRAND PRIX – BELGRADE, 1ST-14TH MARCH

RICHARD RAPPORT'S MOMENT

By GM Alex Colovic / alexcolovic.com
Photo: Mark Livshitz

By the time this issue of BCM appears, the Grand Prix cycle will be over. As things stand now (30th March) - Hikaru Nakamura and Richard Rapport have won the top two places leading to the Candidates. In this issue of BCM, we'll take a look at the most important games from the second leg tournament.

The second leg of the FIDE Grand Prix (GP) tournament in Belgrade brought together 16 of the world's top players, fighting for the two spots in the GP series leading to the Candidates.

As per GP rules, the players were split into four pools where the winner moved to the next stage - a knockout semi-final and final.

Despite international events casting a shadow, the tournament produced a lot of excitement on the board and put one name under the spotlight - Richard Rapport, a Hungarian who has been living in Belgrade, Serbia, for the past seven years.

THE ROAD TO VICTORY

Richard Rapport's path to first place in Belgrade was not easy. He started in Pool C, playing against Vidit Santosh Gujrathi, Vladimir Fedoseev and Alexei Shirov. With four draws and two victories (both against Gujrathi), Rapport secured first place and a ticket for the knockout stage.

In the semi-finals, he was up against Maxime Vachier-Lagrave - the Blitz world champion and winner of Pool D, dubbed the "group of death" as it was made up of extremely strong grandmasters - Shakhriyar Mamedyarov, Yu Yagyi and Alexander Predke.

In the first game of the semi-final match, Rapport defeated Vachier-Lagrave in the Frenchman's favourite opening, the Gruenfeld.

Richard **Rapport** – Maxime **Vachier-Lagrave**

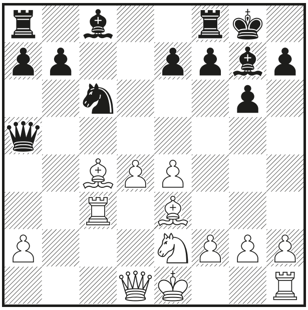
Knockout | Belgrade FIDE Grand Prix
chess24.com (1.2)

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 In a critical moment Vachier stays true to his main weapon. Compared to a similar (must-not-lose) situation in the group phase he chose the QGD against Mamedyarov and drew.

4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.e4 ♘xc3 6.bxc3 ♗g7 7.♗c4 Rapport goes for the classical development. I noticed that in these Grand Prix events his opening preparation was very targeted and concrete. In this game we will see one example of it.

7...c5 8.♘e2 0-0 9.♗e3 ♘c6 10.♖c1 The usual move here is 10.0-0, but Rapport has a concrete idea in mind.

10...cxd4 11.cxd4 ♕a5+ 12.♖c3!?



This was Rapport's idea that made Vachier sink into deep thought. This rare move was aimed to catch Vachier by surprise and it succeeded!

It has been established for a long time that the main move 12.♔f1 is parried by 12...♕a3!, targeting the bishop on e3 and preventing f3. 13.♖c3 ♕d6 when Black has satisfactory play.

CHESS GRAND PRIX SERIES 2022

As the tournament progressed, the audience grew

12...e5?! In one of his interviews Vachier said he was happy with how he was calculating variations in this event, but here he couldn't calculate his way through. While the move looks tempting, it gives White a solid advantage.

Rapport himself admitted that his opening idea was more of a bluff as he knew that after the correct 12...♗g4! 13.f3 ♖ad8! Black obtains a good game. Now taking the piece is bad for White: 14.fxg4? ♘xd4! 15.♗d2 ♘xe2 16.♖d3 ♖xd3 17.♗xa5 ♖xd1+ 18.♔xd1 ♘d4 with a winning endgame for Black.

13.d5 ♘d4 14.♗d2! White unpins and Black's centralised knight can now be exchanged.

14...♗d7 15.♘xd4 exd4 16.♖c1 ♕a3 17.♕b3! In the endgame White will have an easy game as his central pawns can go forward while Black needs to be careful not to lose the pawn on d4. At the same time Black's queenside pawns are not a real threat as going forward they cannot produce a passed pawn since White's light-squared bishop effectively prevents that.

17...♕xb3 Escaping to d6 is worse: after 17...♕d6 18.0-0, with the threat of ♗b4, White is winning as his pawns are supported by the queen and the bishops.

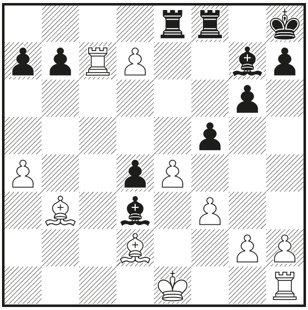
18.♗xb3 ♖ae8 Vachier tries to fight the central pawns with fire, by attacking them with ...f5, but this only worsens his position.

Opposing on the c-file was better, though White has a clear advantage after 18...♖fc8 19.♔e2 ♗b5+ 20.♔f3 as long-term Black cannot stop the advance of the central pawns.

19.f3 f5 It appears that Black has an attack along the e-file, but after a series of forcing moves White defends and also deflects Black's activity.

20.♖c7 ♗b5 21.a4 Further attacking the bishop as White wants to have better control of the d7-square, where his d-pawn will arrive in two moves.

21...♗d3 22.d6+ ♔h8 23.d7



This was the point of White's play - now the black rook must leave the e-file and going to d8 won't attack the pawn on d7 in the absence of the light-squared bishop from the b5-square.

23...♖b8 Going to d8 is met by ♗g5.

24.♗b4 Activating the dark-squared bishop with tempo. The following play continues to be forced but Black cannot avoid losing material.

24...♗e5 In case of 24...♖fd8 25.♗e7 White wins the exchange.

25.♗xf8 ♗xc7 26.♗e7 Threatening mate with ♗f6 so Black doesn't have time to take on e4.

26...♔g7 27.e5 And now the pawn on e5 is taboo in view of d8♕.

27...b5 A desperate attempt at counterplay.

28.♗f6+ ♔f8 29.e6 ♗d8 Black barely manages to hold off the white pawns.

30.♗e5 ♖b6 31.♗xd4 ♖c6 32.axb5 ♗xb5 After 32...♖c1+ 33.♔d2 ♖xh1 34.♗c5+ ♔g7 35.e7 one of the pawns will promote.

33.♔f2 White finally gets his rook into the game. It is only a matter of time before the pawns move forward and win more material.

33...♔e7 34.♗e3 Threatening ♗g5.

34...♗b6 35.♖d1 The d-pawn moves forward now.

35...♗xe3+ 36.♔xe3 ♖c3+ 37.♔f4 Black resigned as after 37.♔f4 ♖d3 38.♖xd3 ♗xd3 39.♔g5 ♗b5 40.♔h6 he is totally helpless as White collects the kingside pawns.

1-0

In the second game, Rapport managed to hold the Frenchman to a draw despite the game being sharp and the position favouring White.

THE DECISIVE GAME OF THE FINALS

Then came the finals. In the first game Rapport drew as Black against Dmitry Andreikin, who reached the final stage following a victory against Anish Giri in the tiebreaks.

Following a relatively quick draw in the first game, everyone expected a big fight in the second - final - game, and Andreikin and Rapport did not disappoint.

RICHARD RAPPORT
DMITRY ANDREIKIN
kaspersky
FIDE
CHESSARENA.COM

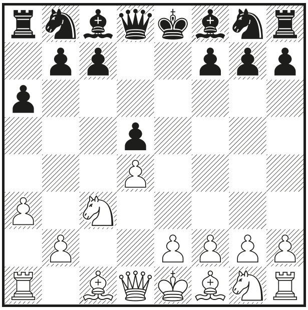
Richard Rapport and Dmitry Andreikin

Richard **Rapport** – Dmitry **Andreikin**

Knockout | Belgrade FIDE Grand Prix
chess24.com (9.1)

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 a6 Andreikin relied on the Janowski Variation in the group phase when he drew with it against Shankland, but he has also played it in the many online events over the recent period, so Rapport could prepare with a high level of probability of meeting it.

4.cxd5 exd5 5.a3!?



And here comes the surprise. As in the game with Vachier, we see Rapport surprising his opponent with a rare move. This time the surprise isn't as forcing as in the game with Vachier, but it does make Andreikin start thinking early on, while Rapport could still follow his preparation.

5...h6 With such non-forcing moves as 5.a3 Black can play anything he wants, but that is exactly why it is a good choice - Andreikin spent some time trying to figure out in which lines the move a3 makes a difference.

6.♗f4 ♘f6 7.e3 c5 Andreikin opts for active play, though the engine quite likes it.

7...♗d6 is an alternative plan that Black employs in this variation and it was quite viable here too. After 8.♗xd6 ♕xd6 9.♗d3 0-0 10.♘ge2 ♗e6 11.0-0 ♘bd7 we have a standard position for the variation.

8.♗e5 Rapport called this move over-ambitious. By threatening ♗xf6 White attacks the pawn on d5.

8...♗e6 9.♘ge2 White wants to put the knight on f4 to put more pressure on d5.

9...♘c6 10.♘f4 cxd4 Black creates an IQP for himself, but obtains active play in return.

11.♗xd4 ♘xd4 12.♕xd4 ♗d6 Black has the pair of bishops and good play as White cannot stabilise his grip in the centre.

13.g3 Another ambitious move. White wants to develop the bishop to g2 to exert more pressure on the pawn on d5, but he delays his development for one more move.

13.♗e2 was the natural move. After for example 13...0-0 14.0-0 ♖c8 15.♖ad1 ♕c7 Black is fine as his control over the dark squares insures him against problems. Now taking on d5 leads to simplifications after 16.♘cxd5 ♘xd5 17.♘xd5 ♗xd5 18.♕xd5 ♗xh2+ 19.♔h1 ♗e5 with a likely draw.

13...♖c8 Black develops quickly, not spending time on castling.

14.♖d1?! Rapport was critical of this move and rightly so, as after Black's next move he is forced to move the rook again.

14.♘xe6 fxe6 15.♗h3 ♔f7 16.0-0 was a forcing line that allowed White to finish development, though Black is perfectly fine after 16...♖c4 17.♕d3 ♗e5 as his dark-squared bishop and the pawns on light squares perfectly complement each other. 18.♘e2

14...♕a5! Threatening ...♗xa3.

15.♖c1 Admitting the mistake. White defends the knight on c3, thus defending against ...♗xa3.

White could have taken on e6 again 15.♘xe6 fxe6 16.♗h3 ♔f7 17.0-0 though the same applies as in the previous note - Black is fine after 17...♖hd8, with a solid position in the centre.

15...0-0 16.♘xe6 Only now White takes, forcing Black to move the king again.

16...fxe6 17.♗h3 ♔f7 18.0-0 ♖c4 19.♕d3 ♗e5 So we have a similar position to the ones we mentioned in the comments above and the evaluation is the same - the position is balanced.

20.♘e2 White wants to transfer the knight to f4 to put more pressure on the pawn on e6.

20...♖fc8 Taking the pawn on b2 is bad: 20...♖xc1?! 21.♖xc1 ♗xb2? 22.♖b1 ♕xa3 23.♕c2 and suddenly the black king is under devastating attack after 23...♗e5 24.♖xb7+ ♔g8 25.♕g6 ♘e8 26.♕xe6+, winning the bishop on e5.

21.♖xc4 ♖xc4 22.b4 White removes the pawn from the attacked square with tempo but gives away some squares on the queenside.

22...♕a4 23.♘f4 By attacking the pawn on e6 White forces the exchange of his opponent's bishop for his knight.

23...♗xf4 24.exf4 ♕c6 Black still has a good game; his excellent centralisation assures against problems.

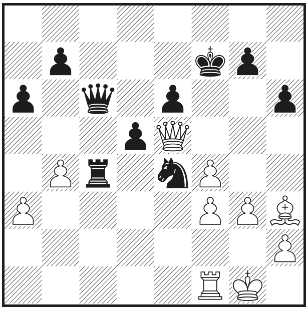
25.♕e3 White's only idea in the position is to attack the pawn on e6 with everything he has, including the pawn on f4 (by pushing f5).

25...♘e4 Black naturally shuts the e-file.

It was also possible to do so with tempo. In fact Rapport called this a simpler possibility for Black. 25...♖e4 26.♕d2 ♖c4 and White cannot do much except to repeat as 27.♖e1 ♘e4 28.♕e3 ♖c2! hitting f2 leads again to a repetition after 29.f3 ♖c3 30.♕e2 ♖c2

26.f3 ♖c3 27.♕d4 ♖c4 28.♕e3 ♖c3 Repeating moves...

29.♕d4 ♖c4 30.♕e5!



From the initial 14 minutes Rapport came down to two and he still decided to continue the game! A very brave decision as he could have claimed a three-fold repetition while with little time left in a sharp position he wasn't able to calculate all the variations. In his own words, he decided to take fate into his own hands and made a leap of faith. And from the many films we have seen, we know how these decisions turn out.

30...♘d2 31.f5! White goes for the attack.

31...♘xf1 Inserting the check was probably simpler as after 31...♕b6+ 32.♔h1 ♘xf1 basically forces White to seek the perpetual after 33.fxe6+ ♔g8 34.♕b8+ *(34.e7? wins for White without the inserted check on b6 (see the comment to 32...♔g8) but here it loses to 34...♘xg3+! 35.♔g2 ♖c2+! 36.♔xg3 ♕g1+ 37.♔h4 ♕g5+! 38.♕xg5 hxg5+ 39.♔xg5 ♖e2 when Black picks up the e-pawn with an elementary win.)* 34...♔h7 35.♗f5+ *(35.e7? even loses for White after 35...♘xg3+! 36.♕xg3 ♖c1+ when all of a sudden it is White's king who is mated.)* 35...g6 36.♗xg6+! ♔xg6 37.♕e8+ and the king cannot hide from checks. But with little time neither player saw this variation.

32.fxe6+ ♔e8?? The decisive mistake, though a natural one.

32...♔e7 was the only move, but quite an improbable one - Black allows the capture on g7 with check. However, the point is that after 33.♕xg7+ ♔d6 the king is not constrained on the back rank. After 34.e7 ♕b6+ 35.♔h1 ♘xg3+! 36.♕xg3+ otherwise White loses 36...♔xe7 the main danger of the passed e-pawn is eliminated and White has nothing more than a perpetual after 37.♕e5+ ♔f8 38.♕f5+ ♔e7 39.♕e5+;

32...♔g8? loses to 33.e7 ♔f7 *(it's too late for 33...♕b6+ 34.♔xf1 ♖c1+ 35.♔e2 ♕b5+ 36.♔d2 and there are no more checks and the rook on c1 hangs.)* 34.♗f5! threatening e8♕ followed by ♗g6 or vice versa.

33.♕xg7 Now Black loses owing to the bad position of his king.

33...♕b6+ 33...♕c7 34.♕g6+ ♔e7 35.♗xf1 wins for White - after picking up the knight he will return to attack the black king and push the e-pawn.

34.♔xf1 ♖c1+ 35.♔e2 ♖e1+ A practical attempt, but Andreikin was unlucky that White manages to get to the time control and then find the escape from the perpetual check.

36.♔xe1 ♕e3+ 37.♔d1 ♕d3+ 38.♔c1 ♕e3+ 39.♔b1 ♕d3+ 40.♔c1 ♕e3+ 41.♔b2 Time control passed and Rapport found the way to hide his king.

41...♕d2+ 42.♔a1! ♕c1+ 43.♔a2 ♕c4+ 44.♔b2 ♕e2+ 45.♔a1 ♕f1+ To give perpetual Black needs the f1-square so he can then give check from c4, but unfortunately there is a piece guarding that square...

After 45...♕d1+ 46.♔a2 ♕c2+ 47.♕b2 ♕c4+ 48.♔a1 the checks end.

46.♗xf1

1-0

Rapport's success in Belgrade continued his great performance in Berlin, in the first leg of the Grand Prix Tour, where he reached the semi-finals.

By the time this issue of BCM reaches you, the third leg of the Grand Prix series will have finished in Berlin and we will know who the two players going forward are. However, with this victory in Belgrade and a semi-final from the first leg in Berlin, Richard Rapport was in strong contention to take one of the two places leading to the Candidates tournament.

ALEXEI SHIROV:
TODAY WE KNOW MORE ABOUT THE TRUTH OF CHESS

Alexei Shirov will turn 50 this year. He was by far the oldest player in the Grand Prix series, having qualified thanks to his great performance at the Grand Swiss in Riga in 2021. We asked him how does his day and age in chess - the 1990s and early 2000s, when he dominated chess with the likes of Anand, Kramnik, Gelfand, Ivanchuk and others - compare to today.

- Chess became very different. When I was of that [younger] age you could try to find some interesting ideas using your head; nowadays, you can find some new moves but they will be in the first several lines of what the engines saw. It is a very rare case nowadays that you invent some move and it turns out that it works really well.

Now it's a totally different way of working on chess. I don't think this applies so much to generations.

In my young years chess was somewhat more interesting. At the same time, when I was 20, I felt frustrated that it was very difficult to understand the truth of the game. Now we know much more about the game of chess than 30 years ago and that's not a bad thing after all.

EVEN THE GREAT MASTERS BLUNDER

The first game to finish on the first day of the Belgrade Grand Prix was between Pentala Harikrishna and Nikita Vitiugov.

There isn't really much to say about the game as White blundered on move 13. with ♘xd5, ending up a pawn down and in a hopeless position.

'I missed 13…♘e4… It just happened. I thought Black would take on d5…'. It just goes to show that these things happen even to the best professionals.

'This is not the first time I blundered, and it won't be the last time. It happens. But I will just think about tomorrow's game and fight,' said Harikrishna.

Pentala **Harikrishna** – Nikita **Vitiugov**

FIDE Grand Prix 2 Pool B Belgrade SRB (1.1)

1.e4 c5 For a long time Vitiugov's repertoire was based on the French and 1...e5. But some time ago he made an attempt to reinvent himself and started to employ the more aggressive Sicilian against 1.e4. He also started to play 1.e4 with White and these changes resulted in his becoming a Russian champion in 2021.

2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 ♘c6 This was probably a surprise for Harikrishna as Vitiugov has never played the Four Knights Sicilian before.

6.♕d3 The main lines are 6.♘xc6 and 6.♘db5, but in an attempt to avoid his opponent's preparation Harikrishna goes for a rare move, but one that has been tried by Caruana against Grischuk at the second leg of the Candidates tournament in 2021.

6...d5 Black reacts with the central thrust that gives him good play.

7.exd5 ♘b4 8.♕g3 Caruana chose 8.♕c4 and after 8...♘bxd5 9.♗g5?! The simple 9.♗e2 is better. 9...♗b4 Taking on c3 is a possible improvement, though the bishop move is also fine. 10.♗d3 ♗d7 with ...♖c8 to come when Black had a comfortable position in the game: ½-½ (65) Caruana,F (2842)-Grischuk,A (2777) Yekaterinburg RUS 2021

8...♗c5! A precise move, part of Black's preparation.

9.a3 9.♕xg7? doesn't work because of 9...♖g8 10.♗b5+ ♔e7 11.d6+ ♗xd6! *(or 11...♕xd6 12.♕xf6+ ♔xf6 13.♘e4+ ♔e7 14.♘xd6 ♗xd4 15.♘xc8+ ♖axc8 16.0-0 ♖xc2 with an advantage to White in the endgame due to the maximum activity of his pieces.)* 12.♕h6 ♗c5 and White loses material as the knight on d4 is attacked twice and it cannot move because of the fork ...♘xc2.

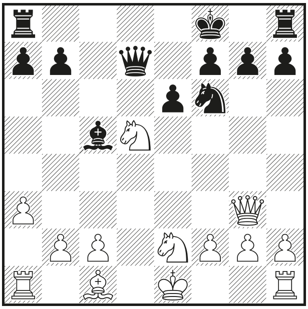
9...♘bxd5 10.♗b5+ 10.♘xd5 is safer, though it doesn't pose any problems to Black after 10...♕xd5 11.♘b5 0-0 with a comfortable position for Black since 12.♘c7?! doesn't work in view of 12...♕e4+ 13.♗e2 ♖b8 and White cannot castle and his knight on c7 is stranded, while going after the exchange is even worse: 14.♘a6? bxa6 15.♕xb8 ♕xg2 16.♖f1 e5! with a winning attack.

10...♔f8 Black loses the right to castle but the king defends the pawn on g7 now.

11.♘de2 ♗d7 Black develops with tempo.

12.♗xd7 ♕xd7 Black is fully developed and only needs to find a way to connect the rooks, but even without that he has comfortable play as all his remaining pieces are well-placed.

13.♘xd5??



Strangely enough this natural move has a huge tactical flow and is a losing mistake.

13.0-0 was played in a previous game. It continued 13...♖d8 14.b4 ♗d6 15.♕f3 ♗e5 with a balanced position. ½-½ (102) Tari,A (2639)-Vidit,S (2726) chess24.com INT 2021.

13...♘e4! An unexpected zwischenzug! Black attacks the pawn on f2 instead of automatically recapturing the knight.

14.♕b3 ♗xf2+ 15.♔f1 exd5 Black has won a pawn and in addition to the material advantage, he continues the attack on the opponent's king.

16.♗e3 ♕f5! Vitiugov's play is very forceful.

17.♘d4 ♕f6 18.♘f3 The only way to defend against mate but now Black wins more pawns.

18...♗xe3 19.♕xe3 ♕xb2 20.♖e1 ♕xc2 It's three pawns now.

21.♔g1 ♕c5 22.♘d4 ♖c8 23.h4 h5 Allowing for the development of the rook via h6.

24.♔h2 ♕d6+ White has nothing for the three-pawn deficit and resigned.

0-1

Pentala Harikrishna

GRISCHUK NOT IN THE MOOD

Alexander Grischuk was not in his element in Belgrade. Following a poor performance in the first leg in Berlin, the Russian continued in similar vein in Belgrade. He just couldn't focus. As he said - his mind was elsewhere.

In the following game against Sam Shankland, Grischuk had solid chances and created a better position in the opening, but then he lost his way.

Sam **Shankland** - Alexander **Grischuk**

FIDE Grand Prix 2 Pool A Belgrade SRB (2.2)

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6! In the first leg in Berlin Grischuk tried the King's Indian against Nakamura in a game he felt he had to win and lost. In Belgrade he lost the first game with White to Andreikin and was forced to play catch-up from the start. Shankland had to consider the possibility of a King's Indian, but as Grischuk noted in one press conference the threat of playing the King's Indian can sometimes be stronger than playing it.

3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.♕c2 0-0 5.a3 ♗xc3+ 6.♕xc3 d5 The most reliable line for Black against Capablanca's favourite system with 4.♕c2.

7.♘f3 b6 Black aims for quick development to take advantage of the somewhat exposed position of White's queen.

8.♗g5 dxc4 9.♕xc4 c5!? This is much less frequent than 9...♗a6 (the main move) and 9...♗b7 (the second main move) and shows Grischuk's preparation.

10.dxc5 bxc5 11.♘d2 Taking the pawn is possible, though it gives Black compensation after 11.♕xc5 ♘bd7, and wherever the queen moves Black increases his development advantage, when White must be careful all the time not to run into problems. It's understandable why Shankland wanted to play it safe and decided not to venture here.

11...♗a6 12.♕c2 Again 12.♕xc5?! ♘bd7 gives Black active play.

12...h6 13.♗h4 ♘bd7 14.e3 ♗xf1 15.♖xf1 If White can establish a blockade on c4 and get his king to safety he will have an advantage because of the better pawn structure, but both those conditions are big "ifs".

15...c4! Grischuk continues forcefully. Other moves were possible, but he decided not to give White access to the c4-square.

16.♔e2 Shankland rushes to connect the rooks.

Taking the pawn again looks risky: 16.♘xc4 ♖c8 17.b3 a5 threatening ...a4 to undermine the knight on c4. 18.a4 ♕c7 Attacking the h2-pawn. 19.♗g3 ♕b7 20.f3 ♘d5 with great activity for the pawn.

16...♕b8 Black gets the queen to the b-file and attacks the pawn on h2 at the same time.

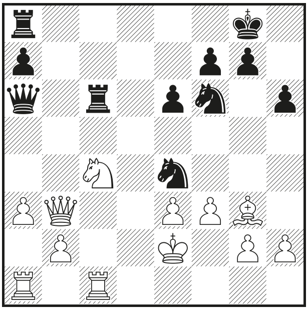
17.♗g3 ♕b7 18.f3 ♖fc8 Black is much more active and since White wasn't able to blockade the c-pawn he is under pressure.

19.♖fc1 ♘c5 Grischuk insists on sacrificing the c4-pawn.

19...♘b6 was an alternative, Black continues to enjoy the more active position with equal material. 20.♔f2 ♖d8 and with ...♖ac8 next Black continues to put pressure on White's position.

20.♕xc4 This is now forced as the threats were ...♘d3 or ...♘b3.

20...♘ce4 21.♕b3 ♕a6+ 22.♘c4 ♖c6?



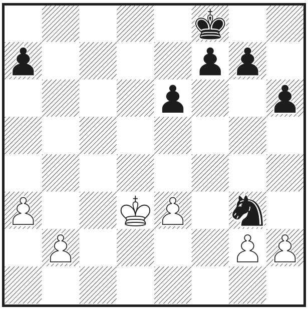
Grischuk was obviously out of form in Belgrade. Here he miscalculates.

It was essential to take on g3 first and only then try to double on the c-file. 22...♘xg3+ 23.hxg3 ♖c6 24.♕d3 ♕b7 avoiding ♘e5 ideas with ...♕c7 and then either ...♖c8 or ...♖d8 to come with compensation for the pawn.

23.fxe4 ♖ac8 24.♕d3! Black will regain the piece but will end up in a lost endgame.

24...♖xc4 25.♖xc4 ♕xc4 26.♕xc4 ♖xc4 27.♔d3 ♖c8 28.♖d1 Black's problem is not that he's a pawn down - he will regain it - but that he cannot oppose White's queenside majority, which is aided by the long-ranged bishop and the king.

28...♖d8+ 29.♔e2 ♖xd1 30.♔xd1 ♘xe4 31.♔c2 ♔f8 32.♔d3 ♘xg3



The pawn endgame is hopeless, but so was the alternative.

Keeping the light pieces after 32...f5 33.♔c4 ♔e7 34.♗e5 g5 35.b4 leads to a relatively easily winning endgame for White who only needs to advance his queenside pawns to win.

33.hxg3 ♔e7 34.♔c4 h5 35.♔c5 ♔d7 36.b4 g5 37.b5 h4 38.gxh4 gxh4 39.a4 Black is nowhere near creating a passed pawn.

1-0

AN AMAZING DECIDING GAME

It seems that Dmitry Andreikin played the tournament on two fronts: one was on the chessboard, with the moves; the other - in the field of psychology, playing drawish positions, checking if his opponents were paying attention and waiting for their position to crumble slowly.

In Pool A it was Andreikin and Shankland who had the most chances to move to the next stage. If they drew their last, round six games, or if both won, the two would have to play each other in the tiebreak. However, if Andreikin lost and Shankland drew, it would be Bacrot and the American who would have to decide in tiebreaks who was to move forward to the semi-finals.

In the following game Andreikin opted for a rare line in the Queen's Gambit Accepted against Etienne Bacrot but did not get even a slight edge. Bacrot was holding his own quite comfortably, and a draw seemed like the most logical outcome. Trying to reverse his fortune, Andreikin ventured upon a queen sacrifice for a rook and minor piece, but it did not offer much.

The game was full of twists and turns where both sides had a significant advantage and then blundered it away. Aside from their mistakes, this was by far the most exciting game in Belgrade, thanks to Andrekin's courage to play for a win even if that meant taking huge risks.

Dmitry **Andreikin** - Erienne **Bacrot**

FIDE Grand Prix 2 Pool A Belgrade SRB (6.1)

1.d4 d5 2.♘f3 e6 3.c4 dxc4 The Queen's Gambit Accepted is one of Bacrot's staple defences with Black.

4.e3 ♘f6 5.♗xc4 c5 6.0-0 a6 7.♘bd2!? A rare move compared to all the other main lines like 7.♗b3, 7.♗d3, 7.dxc5, 7.a4, 7.♕e2 and several others.

7...cxd4 8.♘xd4 ♗c5 9.♘4b3 Deviating from an earlier game that featured the World Champion.

9.b3!? ♗xd4 10.exd4 0-0 *(10...♕xd4? 11.♗a3 is horrible for Black who will never castle.)* 11.♗a3 ♖e8 12.♗d3 ♗d7 and with the bishop coming to c6 and the knight to d7 Black will have excellent piece placement and good play against the IQP as compensation for White's pair of bishops. ½-½ (47) Le,Q (2709)-Carlsen,M (2865) chess24.com INT 2022

9...♗e7 10.♗e2 White wants to play ♘c4 now, so with his next move Black prevents it.

10...b5 11.a4 A typical way for White to undermine Black's queenside in the QGA.

11...bxa4 12.♖xa4 0-0 13.♘c4 ♗d7 Exchanging queens was possible: 13...♕xd1 14.♖xd1 ♗d7 with an equal endgame, but Bacrot was also in contention for qualifying from the group stage (he was trailing Andreikin and Shankland by half a point and a win in this game with the likely draw in the game Grischuk-Shankland would have led to a tie-break for first) so he wants to keep the game more complex.

14.♖a1 ♘c6 15.♘bd2 Andreikin decides to transfer the knight on b3 back to f3 (note that the knight went ♘f3xd4-b3 and now goes back to f3 via d2).

15.♗d2 looks more natural, developing the dark-squared bishop. 15...♕c7 16.♘ba5 ♘d5 with a complicated middlegame where all pieces are still on the board.

15...♘d5 16.♘f3 ♘cb4 17.♗d2 The bishop finally comes out. The pawns of both sides are far from each other and they play only with pieces, which requires serious calculation.

17...♕b8 18.♘ce5 ♗b5 The first piece exchange in the game.

19.♗xb5 ♕xb5 20.♘d4 ♕b7 21.♕b3 White has nice knights on the dark squares while Black has good control on the queenside. Now in view of the pin on the b-file White threatens ♘ec6.

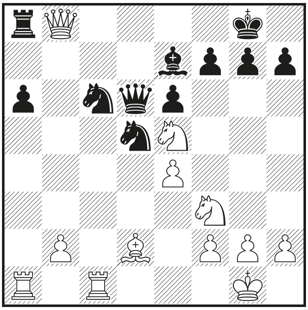
21...♕c7 Black escapes from the pin with tempo, attacking the knight on e5.

22.♘df3 ♖fb8 22...♕c2 was an attempt to simplify the position, but, as I mentioned, Bacrot wanted to keep his qualification chances alive - with a draw it would be Andreikin playing the tie-break with Shankland. 23.♕xc2 ♘xc2 24.♖a5 ♖fc8 is an equal endgame.

23.♖fc1 ♕d6 24.e4 White tries to weaken Black's grip, based on the connected knights.

24...♘c6 24...♘f6 was an alternative the position remains complex but it seems that White has some initiative after 25.♕c4 h6 26.♗f4 *(or 26.♘xf7!? ♔xf7 27.e5 ♕d5 28.exf6 ♕xc4 29.♖xc4 gxf6 30.♗xh6 ♘d3 regaining the pawn on b2.)* 26...♘h5 27.♗e3 threatening ♖d1. 27...♖b7 28.♖d1 ♕c7 29.♖ac1 with a more pleasant position for White as the knight on h5 still needs to come back into play.

25.♕xb8+!



The fireworks start! There was no need for this, but Andreikin decides to test fate.

The forcing line 25.♖xc6 ♖xb3 26.♖xd6 ♗xd6 27.exd5 ♗xe5 28.♘xe5 ♖xb2 29.♘f3 exd5 led to an equal endgame, but one where only Black can play for a win.

25...♘xb8 26.♖c8+ ♗f8 27.exd5 White only has a rook and knight for the queen but he banks on Black's lack of coordination thanks to the pins on the back rank.

27...exd5? This recapture surprisingly is a losing mistake!

27...♕xd5 was better: it defends the rook on a8 and frees the knight on b8. 28.♖a4 with the idea ♖d4. 28...♘c6! 29.♖xa8 ♘xe5 30.♖4xa6 ♘xf3+ 31.gxf3 ♕xd2 32.♖b6 should end in a draw after White captures the pinned bishop on f8 after ♖bb8xf8.

28.♖ac1 Natural, but putting the rook on e1 was better.

28.♖e1! the point is that Black cannot prevent the simple idea of ♘d3 and ♖ee8. If he tries 28...♕e6 *(Black cannot play as in the game 28...f6 29.♘d3 and ♖ee8 comes next.)* then White has 29.♖d8 ♕b6 30.♘c6! ♕xc6 31.♖ee8 ♘d7 32.♖xa8 and the pin on the back rank is decisive.

28...f6 29.♘c6 Tempting, but dropping back to d3 was better.

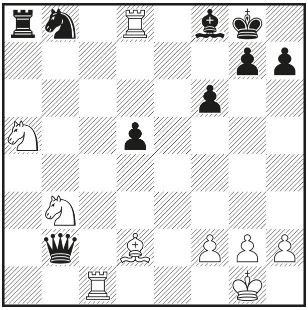
29.♘d3 a5 30.♖e1!, with similar ideas to those in the previous note, the most direct one being ♖ee8. The difference is that with a tempo more Black can get away with the king from the back rank: 30...♔f7 31.♖ee8 ♗e7, though White still has a considerable advantage after 32.♗f4 ♕e6 33.h4 as Black is still awkwardly pinned on the queenside.

29...a5?! 29...♘xc6! was simpler. 30.♖xa8 ♕d7, getting away from the pin on the sixth rank after ♖xa6. 31.♖xa6 ♘e5 and Black can breathe freely now.

30.♖d8? This loses the advantage.

30.♘cd4! kept the control. White still wants to get the other rook to the eighth rank, either by ♖d8(e8) and ♖cc8 or ♖e1-e8. For example: 30...♕a6 31.♖d8 ♔f7 32.♖c7+ ♗e7 33.♗f4 with a completely dominating position.

30...♕c7 31.♘fd4 ♕b7 32.♘xa5 ♕xb2 33.♘db3?



White is in danger of losing now. It's clear that he lost the plot to a certain degree as his pieces lost harmony and are now dispersed on the queenside.

33.♘e6! ♔f7 34.♘xf8 ♕xd2 35.♖c7+ ♘d7 36.♖dxd7+ ♔xf8 37.♖f7+ would have led to a perpetual check.; 33.♘ab3 was also better than the game move. After 33...♘c6 34.♖xa8 ♘xd4 35.♘xd4 ♕xd2 36.♘b3 the position is approximately equal.

33...♔f7 34.♗f4 ♗b4 Black develops activity thanks to the awkward position of White's knights on the queenside.

35.♖c7+? White is lost after this check. Andreikin goes for mate, but there isn't one... unless Black blunders into one!

35.♖xd5 was the way to stay in the game. 35...g5 36.♗e3 ♔g6 still maintains an advantage for Black as now it is White who is tied down, but at least this is not losing for White.

35...♔g6 36.♖g8 ♗xa5 Black wins a piece and it's clear that if White doesn't deliver mate he can resign. Now the deciding factor was the severe time trouble both players were in.

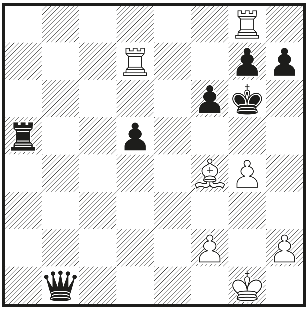
37.♘xa5 ♖xa5 37...♔f5! was more precise, avoiding any problems with the king, but such subtleties are difficult intime-trouble.

38.g4! A very unpleasant move - suddenly the king is in danger.

38...♘d7? After this panicky move the game should end in a draw.

38...f5! solved the king problems and was still winning for Black: for example, after 39.♖xb8 ♕f6 White no longer has threats and Black has a decisive material advantage.

39.♖xd7 ♕b1+??



The tragedy of the wrong square.

39...♕a1+ 40.♔g2 f5 was the saving move for Black; the queen defends the g7-square and the king gets some breathing space. 41.♖d6+ ♔f7 42.♖dd8 threatening ♖gf8. 42...fxg4 *(42...♔g6 43.♖d6+ is a perpetual.)* 43.♖gf8+ ♔e6 44.♖de8+ ♔d7 45.♖d8+ and the king cannot hide from the checks.

40.♔g2 Now there is no perpetual and Black gets mated.

40...♕e4+ 41.♔g3 ♖a3+ 42.♔h4 Black will be mated so he resigned. An amazing game where Andreikin was rewarded for his courage.

1-0

INTERVIEW: RICHARD RAPPORT, WINNER OF THE BELGRADE GRAND PRIX

‘IT’S LIKE ADDING A JEWEL TO THE CROWN’

After the finals in Belgrade, BCM's Milan Dinic spoke to Richard Rapport about his experience at the tournament and about his take on chess.

BCM: Congratulations on your victory. First of all, how are you feeling now?

Richard Rapport: Well, it’s hard to describe, actually. Obviously I’m very relieved, lots of happy emotions combined. The second game of the finals, with Dmitry [Andreikin], was extremely tense. I knew I was completely winning for, I don’t know - 15 minutes, but still, you’re never sure because it’s so important adapting yourself. So, I was extremely glad when it was sealed finally.

BCM: When you played your 30.♕e5 in the final game against Andreikin, it was a big moment. We were all watching outside. Andreikin had 11 minutes and you were by that point down to two minutes. For us who don't know much about chess, the computer was showing that the position was completely equal, a dead draw. So it was a question of whether you should do a repetition of moves or something else. And yet, it seems, that you showed to us all that – for once – the computers were not right in their evaluation.

R.R: This was all the result of a mindset because I wasn’t really afraid of the tiebreaks. I was just thinking that I would like to have my chances in a classical game. And that was, if you will, the steppingstone - the point where I was to decide what to do: I could claim a draw, basically, or play on. I opted for the latter. Of course, I couldn’t calculate till the end. And if you look at it with the engine, it’s just all the same. Queen to e5 was a good move. But it poses problems for both of us to solve, and I had very little time. I think none of us really knew the evaluation at that point. So, it was a kind of a gamble, a leap of faith, if you will, just, purely from a sporting point of view.

BCM: When Dmitri shook your hand, what was the feeling in that very moment? Did you feel as though a weight had fallen off your chest?

R.R: Before the game I was thinking of my strategy. The first game was maybe ‘soft’ from his part - he didn’t really test me in any way. So, I figured that he would like to go for tiebreaks, and I decided as a strategy to go kind of all the way in the second game. Obviously, this is kind of ironic because I got into a worse position, I think, after the 20th move. But mentally I was ready for any scenario, really.

Also, I know how it is to watch all of this for the very few who really cared for me, such as my wife [Jovana Rapport, nee Vojinovic, Serbian chess player - note, BCM], for instance. I was very glad that I won and I hope she’s proud or happy because we had lots of challenges throughout my career. This is the first time I have had such a big result and we’re happy that it happened here in Belgrade.

BCM: Well, you're the native of Belgrade for about seven years now. So it's a victory at home, so to speak?

R.R: Yes, of course. But actually, throughout the event, I didn't feel like a native, because the organisers were trying so hard to be impartial that they actually achieved that and I didn't feel like I had any home advantage. I felt like I had a bit of a minus! But, yes, I like living here, and I'm very happy that the tournament took place here and I managed to win. But of course, as a chess player, I travel around the world and I am used to this lifestyle.

Usually for me, trips are connected to events and results. So of course, you have favourite places, but usually this is connected to when you play well or when you have a nice time. Strangeas it is, even though this is probably the biggest success of my career up to date, it will still be influenced by my love, my marriage, my life really, and that's all tied to Belgrade. It's like adding a jewel to the crown.

BCM: When we were coming down to the game today, we were in the same elevator, and you and your wife were holding hands and kind of comforting each other just before the second game of the finals started. How important is she as support for you? Who is your biggest support?

R.R: Yeah, she's my only support, actually. I have to thank her for everything including for putting up with me. I am very difficult on normal days as well, but during tournaments, I think my difficult behaviour goes up for 100 times or something like this. And that she put up with me and she handled the stress is great.

I WOULD HAVE HAD MORE FUN PLAYING CHESS A FEW DECADES AGO THAN NOW

- The way I approach chess, I think I would have had more fun a few decades ago than now. However, on the other hand, sometimes it happens that when I look at games between engines, if you give them a playable position, they can create some really interesting games on their own.

From my perspective, to me the most beautiful games have been played between the 1970s and early 2000s.

BCM: When you were talking about your wife, you said that you're very difficult. Are chess players difficult people?

R.R: I don't really know many, actually. My wife is not so difficult. She looks difficult from the outside, but from the inside, I think she's an angel. I don't really know about others. I'm not so close tothem on a daily basis. I have friends but most of my closer friends are not chess players.

Chess is a very hard profession. The financial rewards are not as high as in other similar sports, and everything is on the line for minutes and seconds. So, it's a very stressful life. And I believe because of this, most of us might have some flaws in character.

Obviously, we live in an unstable environment, both geographically and in terms of our professional choice. One day you wake up and everything seems easy the next day your mind doesn't work, and, uh, the simplest things can cause you problems.

BCM: Computers have improved our knowledge and understanding of chess a lot. Also, you proved to be a very creative player - going beyond the computer. Do you think we put just too much trust in computers nowadays when it comes to chess?

R.R: I don't think so. When the computers play all would end up in triple zero, ie in an even position. When the human touch comes in, it's mostly the mistakes. Because we have computers, nowadays it might not be so interesting to kibitz or commentate on chess.

In the pre-computer era we had strong players playing. They were doing exactly the same as we do know - playing the best they

Rapport with his wife Jovana, 'his only support' as he put it

could, making mistakes and being nervous about it. But no one really knew that apart from the opponents at that level. Nowadays, you turn on a remotely weak computer and the next thing is that you know everything about the game and you are just hoping for a mistake or for the guy not to make a mistake. This is a major factor.

It's very hard to sell something when everyone knows the truth already except the people who are doing it.

The fact that the engine is on is always there, in the back of your head. And you think "Okay, but how hard was this move really"? I think that's where the commentators need to step in and to explain to the viewers how hard it was to find a particular move. It's a very thin line.

BCM: Many of the people watching this have kids. They want to introduce them to chess. What would be your advice to people who are trying to get their kids into chess?

R.R: I'm not the biggest advocate for people to start playing chess in general, so my answer might be a bit depressing. I believe that you have to be sure about your choices. As a parent, you have to reconsider things and understand all the possible downsides. You can make a certain living from being a player. But of course, there are no guarantees that you are going to be a great player, just as there are no guarantees in any field in life that you are going to make it to the top. And then the next question is, of course, that of the level of living or style of living, sufficient for your hopes for your children. It's a hard decision, but I think it's this decision which is best made immediately.

On the other hand, I do believe that, when you introduce chess to children as a hobby, it is an amazing game. It has lots of moments and you can have a fulfilling time which might be even better than playing computer games. But of course, when you're set to set out to conquer the highest highs of the chess world, that's a different story. And I will just caution people to think about it more than once.

REPRINT - NEW YORK TIMES, 13TH JUNE 1954

US CHAMPION SAMUEL RESHEVSKY ON HOW RUSSIANS BECAME DOMINANT IN CHESS

Between 16 and 24 June 1954 a match was held in New York's Hotel Roosevelt between the Soviet and the US chess teams. The eight-board, four-round match ended with a decisive 20-12 victory for the Soviets. In an article for the New York Times ahead of the match, US chess champion Samuel Reshevsky shared his thoughts on how the Soviets (whom he kept calling 'the Russians') became so good at chess and why this was so important to them.

As we now live in a time of revived interest in Russia and its influence, albeit with concern, here at BCM we thought it might be interesting to the readers to see this article, written nearly 70 years ago, which shares a view on the role chess had, both as an internal and external weapon, for the Soviets. You will draw your own conclusions from it, but it seems that in this article Reshevsky noted some aspects of the Russian approach to chess which hints at principles which seem to still be important factors in the official state policy in Moscow today.

Milan Dinic, BCM Editor

CHESS IS ANOTHER SOVIET GAMBIT

Russian players are the world's best. They have to be. To the Kremilin, every pawn and rook is a cold-war fighter

The Russian chess team, possibly the greatest collection of chess talent in the history of the game, is scheduled to play the American team in New York this week. Although our players are first rate by all chess standards, the Russians are favored to win; they haven't lost a match in postwar international competition. In 1952, at the last chess Olympics [held in Helsinki, Finland – note BCM], the Russians were first among twenty-five national team. This year [the 1954 Chess Olympiad, in Amsterdam, the Netherlands – note BCM], they licked the crack Argentine team, the best in Latin America. And the last time Russia played the Americans, in Moscow in 1945, they won.

What makes the Russians so tough? Why have they so consistently beaten some of the world's best teams and players?

Essentially, the answer is simple. The American monthly, Chess Review, summed it up in a few words. In the Soviet Union, a recent editorial said, chess is "an instrument of national policy." Russian chess players perform "like soldiers in a war… they are standard bearers of Soviet culture". It has become painfully obvious to their opponents that the Russians bring to the chess board all the fervor, skill and manifest devotion to their cause that Molotov [Vyacheslav Molotov, Soviet minister of foreign affairs in the 1940s and from 1953 – 1956 – note BCM] brings to a diplomatic conference. They are out to win for the greater glory of the Soviet Union. To do so means public acclaim at home, propaganda victories abroad.

This approach to what is, after all, a game, has not come about by chance. There were some good players in Czarist days, although relatively few had international reputations, with the brilliant exception of Dr. Alexander Alekhine. But the game itself was popular in pre-Revolution Russia and maintained its popularity during the Twenties and early Thirties. During the Thirties, the Government, aware of the game's appeal, started a vast program of developing good young players.

Through the Ministry of Sport, encouragement of mass interest in chess was made official Government policy. The best players were sent on lecture and exhibition tours and taught chess classes. Clubs were formed in army and navy units, small towns, schools and universities. Chess libraries were opened. Children down to the age of 6 were taught the rules and intricacies of

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the game. Because the base was already broad, the program caught on. Now, Russia generously rewards its best players. (And criticizes them publicly and severely if they do not measure up in international competitions.)

Most professional Russian players need do nothing but play chess to earn a good living, unlike players elsewhere in the world. The top players in Russia are accorded the social eminence of a major movies star or basketball player in this country. When World Champion Mikhail Botvinnik enters the Moscow Opera House he is loudly applauded. When he leaves, he is surrounded by autograph hounds.

Although Malenkov [Georgy Malenkov was a Soviet politician who briefly succeeded Joseph Stalin as the leader of the Soviet Union, from 1953 to 1955 – note BCM] does not play chess, nor did Stalin before him, the Russian leaders cultivated this state of affairs at home for a very important reason: chess victories abroad carry tremendous international propaganda value in terms of Russian prestige. Americans cannot calculate the results abroad of Russian chess victories because the game does not have anywhere near the popularity or cultural role in this country that it does in Europe and in Latin America.

Last year at Hastings, England, a breathtaking match between the Russians and the British was page one news in England and on the Continent [this is a reference to the 1953/54 Hastings tournament where Conel Hugh O'Donel Alexander finished first ahead of Bronstein, which was seen as an embarrassment for the Soviets – note, BCM]. Many papers published all the moves of several key games. Britain has hundreds of chess clubs of all sizes. Chess publications flourish throughout the world: countries as small as Holland support many.

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The Russians are aware of the game's popularity: their officially sponsored development of chess is designed to exploit it. Out of this development have come the superb Russian masters and grandmasters, eight of whom we will see in action this week.

This team brings great Russian skill with it, but not anything which could be called a Russian style. There ae no national styles as such. Chess players vary as their personalities vary. Some are bold and daring; some conservative, methodical and precise. Some are moody and introspective; some have an infectious sense of humor. The best known players in the Soviet Union are Botvinnik, Vassily Smyslov and David Bronstein – and each of their styles is different.

Botvinnik, 43, is the scientist; he leaves little to chance and attempt to foresee every detail that might have a bearing on the outcome of the game. He evaluates diet, rest, climate, the size and sympathies of the audience, the probable mental state of his opponents. And when he gets into the game itself, the same kind of mind is evident. His play is precise, logical and scientific and it is backed by tremendous self-confidence. He rarely shrinks from difficult positions. He

Chess Is Another Soviet Gambit

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To the Kremlin every pawn and rook is a cold-war fighter.

By SAMUEL RESHEVSKY

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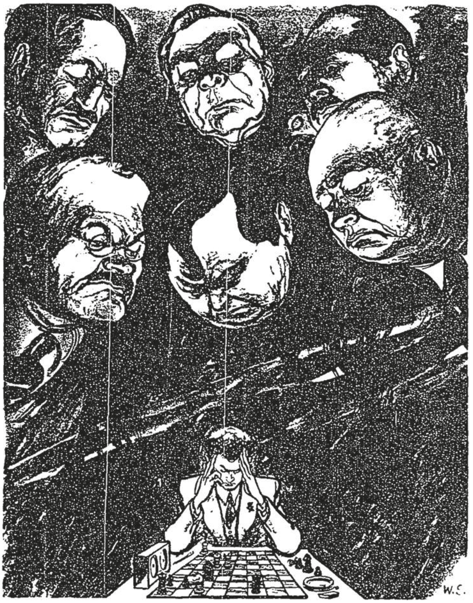

Drawing by William Sharp

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Smyslov, who at 33 is pushing Botvinnik for top Russian honors, is reserved and taciturn. He regards Gorki and Tolstoi as his favorite authors and, unlike many chess players, he also enjoys music, swimming and skiing. He maintains his reserve at the chessboard and is usually the calmest man in the room when he himself is being pushed hard by an opponent.

ONE of Russia's bright young men, 30-year-old Bronstein, is a cheerful, gregarious type. He smiles readily and jokes with members of his own and of the opposition team. Once in a game, though, Bronstein drops the comic role and brings a driving energy into play. He is always on the watch for a bold, challenging conception. Larry Evans, United States chess champion, says Bronstein likes to aim at "risky positions, where everything hangs by a hair."

The other members of the Russian team, although less well known, also have their distinctive manner of play. The styles of all eight Russians vary, their quality does not; it is uniformly good.

But good chess players exist throughout the world, in democracies as well as in dictatorships. What makes good chess players?

They are men who have a basic and intimate knowledge of the game; they know the possibilities and limitations of every piece on the board. They understand human psychology so they can look early for an opponent's weakness and be ready to exploit it. They can handle abstract concepts because the potential variations in play runs into the millions (mathematicians and composers frequently play well). They keep in good physical condition because a championship match can take as much out of a player as fifteen rounds of boxing.

And when they have all this, they must study, study, study and play, play, play.

THIS, the Russians understand. Which is why their players, although they certainly do not have any more of the natural qualifications than the American players, enter this week's tournament so heavily favored to win. The Soviet regime, by giving its players professional status, by providing the climate in which chess players get paid well and enjoy social prestige, also makes it possible for them to devote all their time to study and play.

But the motives behind the Russian system would not be acceptable to the American chess player. We play it as a challenging, exciting, frequently beautiful game and not, as the Russians would have it, as a diplomatic game.

SAMUEL RESHEVSKY, six times U. S. champion, claims the Western world chess title.

The New York Times
Published: June 13, 1954
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HOROWITZ
PAVEY
RESHEVSKY
BRONSTEI
1

BEFORE THE BIG MATCH BEGINS

Samuel Reshevsky (left) shakes hands with Vassily Smyslov, No. 1 man on the Soviet Team. Behind Reshevsky (left to right) are Dake, Bisguier, Evans, Pavey (rear), Don Byrne, Horowitz, Robert Byrne. Behind Smyslov are Bronstein, Geller, a Soviet official, Petrosian, U. S. Team Captain Alexander Bisno (holding microphone), Keres (behind Bisno), and USCF President H. M. Phillips.

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The Grand Ballroom at Hotel Roosevelt

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This article was published on June 13, 1954 in the New York Times. It was written by Samuel Reshevsky, eight-times US champion

The 140th Varsity Chess Match

By IM Shaun Taulbut

Bd	Oxford University	Rtg	Nat	2022	Cambridge University	Rtg	Nat
1w	Tom O'Gorman (Hertford)	2357f	IRL	1-0	Matthew J Wadsworth (Queens')	2432m	ENG
2b	Filip Mihov (Balliol, captain)	2255	MKD	0-1	Harry Grieve (St Catharine's)	2381f	ENG
3w	Victor Vasiesiu (Hertford)	2276f	ROU	½-½	Koby Kalavannan (St Catharine's)	2324f	ENG
4b	Daniel Karim Abbas (Magdalen)	2228f	ENG	½-½	Miroslav Macko (Trinity)	2273f	SVK
5w	Max French (Wadham)	2231	ENG	0-1	Jan Petr (Trinity)	2282f	CZE
6b	Dominic Miller (Somerville)	2123	ENG	1-0	Declan Shafi (Pembroke, captain)	2188	SCO
7w	Akshaya Kalaiyalahan (Regent's Park)	2153f	ENG	1-0	Ognjen Stefanovic (Trinity)	2109	SRB
8b	Daniel Sutton (St John's)	1877	ENG	½-½	Imogen A L Camp (Queens')	1829wc	WLS

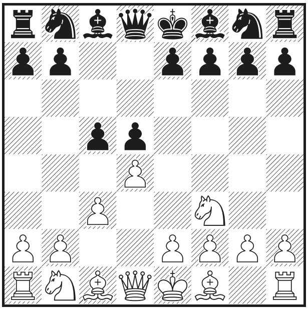
The 140th Varsity Chess Match between Oxford University and Cambridge University was held at the RAC Club in Pall Mall on the 12th March 2022. Oxford won the match 4.5 to 3.5.

We look at the two top board games starting with the win by Harry Grieve on board two. This was a good positional win.

Harry **Grieve** - Filip **Mihov**

140th Varsity Match 2022 London ENG (1.2)

1.♘f3 d5 2.d4 c5 3.c3



Offering a symmetrical position if Black captures on d4, this move is more potent than it appears at first sight.

3...♘f6 3...e6 would avoid White capturing on c5.

4.dxc5 A surprise; White spots a line which presents Black with difficulties.

4...e6 5.♗e3 White protects the pawn and also considers b4 to keep the pawn on c5.

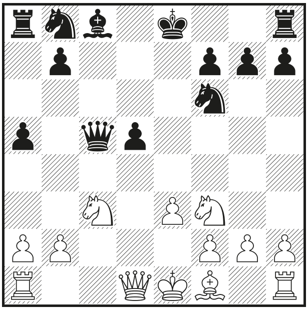
5...a5 Directed against b4 by White; Black cannot attack the white bishop on e3 because of 5...♘g4 6.♕a4+.

6.c4 White switches tack whilst Black is aiming to recapture the pawn on c5.

6...♕c7 If 6...dxc4 7.♕xd8+ ♔xd8 8.♘a3 is much better for White; 6...♘a6 7.cxd5 ♘xc5 *(7...♘xd5 8.♗d4 ♘xc5 9.e3 ♗d7 10.♘e5 is slightly better for White)* 8.♘c3 ♘xd5 9.♘xd5 ♕xd5 10.♕xd5 exd5 11.♖c1, with an edge for White, may be the best line for Black.

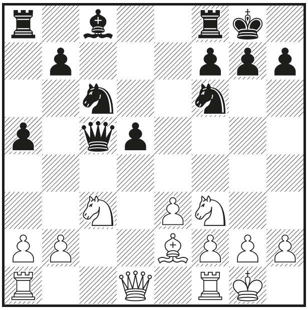
7.♘c3 ♗xc5 If 7...dxc4 8.♘b5 ♕c6 9.♘fd4 is strong, eg 9...♕xc5 10.♘xe6 ♕b4+ 11.♗d2 wins.

8.♗xc5 ♕xc5 9.cxd5 exd5 10.e3



White has the advantage because of the isolated black pawn on d5.

10...0-0 11.♗e2 ♘c6 12.0-0



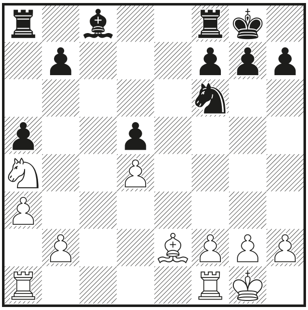
12...♕b4 A mistake; 12...♖d8 13.♖c1 ♗g4 looks best.

13.a3 ♕b6 13...♕xb2 14.♘a4 traps the queen so the queen is forced back.

14.♘a4 ♕a7 15.♘d4 White gains control of the dark squares.

15...♘xd4 If 15...♗d7 16.♘b5 ♕b8 17.♘b6 ♖a6 18.♘xd7 ♘xd7 19.♕xd5 wins a pawn; 15...♖d8 may be best here.

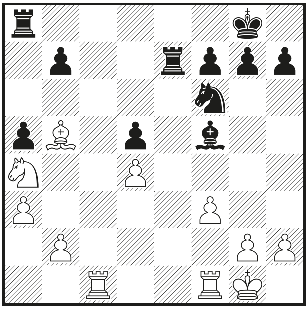
16.♕xd4 ♕xd4 17.exd4



Black has a permanent weakness on b6 and he is constricted, waiting for White to occupy the c-file.

17...♗f5 17...♗d7 18.♘b6 ♖ae8 19.♘xd7 ♘xd7 20.♗b5 ♖e7 21.♖ae1 leads to an edge for White.

18.♖ac1 ♖fe8 19.♗b5 ♖e7 20.f3



White controls e4, preventing Black from posting his knight there, and prepares to double on the c-file.

20...h5 21.♖c3 ♖c8 22.♖xc8+ ♗xc8 23.♖c1 ♗f5 24.♔f2 ♔f8 25.h4 Preventing Black getting play with ...g5. White can play to win the a-pawn by ♖c5 so Black decides to offer an exchange of pieces.

25...♗d7 If 25...g6 26.♖c5 ♖e6 27.♗e2 b6 28.♖c7 ♖d6 29.♖b7 ♖c6 30.♖xb6 wins a pawn.

26.♗xd7 ♖xd7 After 26...♘xd7 27.♖c7 ♘f6 28.♖c5 wins the a-pawn.

27.♖c8+ ♔e7 28.♘c5 ♖d6 29.♖c7+ ♔e8 30.♖xb7 With the loss of the b-pawn the black a-pawn is defenceless.

30...g6 31.♖b5 a4 32.♘xa4 ♘d7 33.♘c5 ♘b6 34.b3

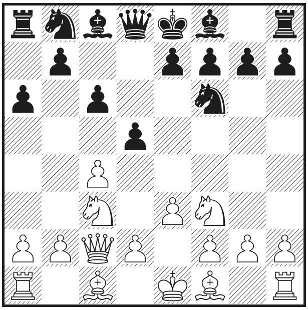
1-0

The top board game featured imaginative play by Tom O'Gorman.

Tom **O'Gorman** - Matthew J **Wadsworth**

140th Varsity Match 2022 London ENG (1.1)

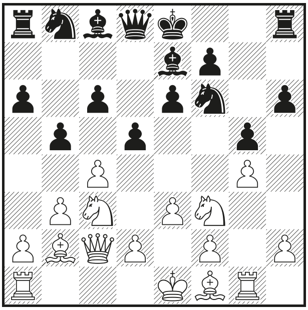
1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 c6 3.♘c3 d5 4.e3 a6 5.♕c2



5...b5 6.b3 e6 7.♗b2 ♗e7 8.g4 The bayonet attack poses a direct threat to Black.

8...h6 If 8...♘xg4 9.♖g1 e5 10.h3 ♘f6 11.♖xg7 ♔f8 12.♖g5 e4 13.♘d4 with advantage to White.

9.♖g1 g5



9...♘bd7 seems best though White can continue 10.h4; after 10..bxc4 11.bxc4 ♖b8 Black has counterplay.

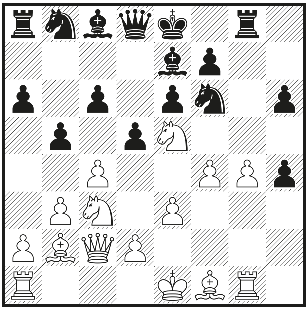
10.h4 An aggressive follow-up is hard to meet as Black cannot stop White opening the kingside.

10...gxh4 11.♘e5 Putting Black under pressure; also good is 11.♘xh4 ♖g8 12.♘f3 ♖xg4 13.♖xg4 ♘xg4 14.♕h7 ♗f8.

11...♖g8 White cannot challenge the knight with his knights eg 11...♘bd7 12.♘xc6.

11...♘fd7 12.♘xd7 ♘xd7 13.cxd5 cxd5 14.♘xd5 wins the exchange; also, if 11...♗b7, 12.g5 hxg5 13.♖xg5 with good play for White.

12.f4

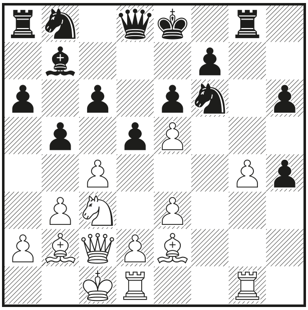


12...♗d6 Best is 12...♗b7 when 13.g5 hxg5 14.fxg5 ♘bd7 15.gxf6 ♖xg1 16.fxe7 ♕c7 17.♘xd7 ♕g3+ 18.♔e2 ♕g4+ 19.♔e1 ♕g3+ is equal.

13.♗e2 Protecting g4.

13...♗b7 14.0-0-0 ♗xe5 14...♘bd7 15.♘xd7 ♔xd7 is better.

15.fxe5



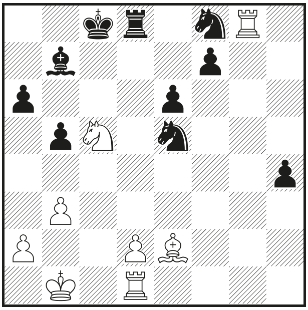
White now has control of the dark squares and a big advantage.

15...♘fd7 16.g5 Also good is 16.d4 ♕g5 17.♔b1.

16...hxg5 After 16...♖xg5 17.♕h7 ♕e7 18.♕xh6 ♖xg1 19.♖xg1 White is much better.

17.♕h7 ♖f8 18.cxd5 cxd5 19.♗a3 ♘c6 20.♗xf8 ♘xf8 21.♕g7 Another line is 21.♕h8 ♕c7 22.♖xg5 0-0-0 .

21...♕c7 22.♔b1 ♕xe5 23.♖xg5 ♕xg7 24.♖xg7 d4 25.♘e4 0-0-0 26.♘c5 ♘e5 27.exd4 ♖xd4 28.♖g8 ♖d8

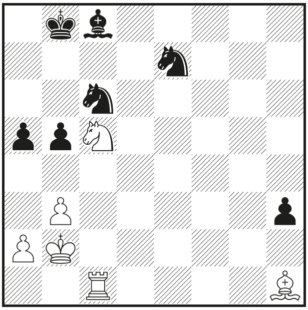


29.♖c1 Also good is 29.d4 with strong play, eg 29...♘ed7 30.♘xb7 ♔xb7 31.♖g7 f6 32.♖h1 rounding up the pawn on h4.

29...♔b8 30.d4 ♘eg6 31.♗h5 Good is 31.♖f1 h3 32.♖xf7 ♗c6 33.♗f3 ♗xf3 34.♘xa6+ ♔a8 35.♖xf3 h2 36.♖h3 ♖xd4 37.♖xh2 with a decisive advantage for White.

31...♘e7 32.♖h8 ♗c8 33.♗xf7 ♘f5 34.d5 Strong is 34.♖g1 ♘xd4 35.♖gg8, which is winning.

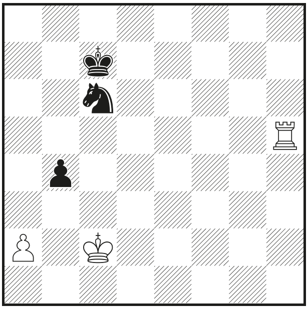
34...exd5 35.♗xd5 ♘e6 36.♖xd8 ♘xd8 37.♔b2 h3 38.♔a3 a5 39.♔b2 ♘e7 40.♗h1 ♘dc6



41.♘a6+ Also good is 41.♘d3 ♗d7 42.♖c5 b4 43.♖h5 ♔c7 when 44.♘f2 rounds up the h-pawn.

41...♔b7 42.♘b8 ♔xb8 43.♗xc6 b4 44.♗e4 ♗d7 45.♖c5 a4 46.bxa4 ♗xa4 47.♖h5 ♔c7 48.♖xh3 ♔d6 49.♖h5 ♘c6 50.♖d5+ ♔c7 51.♗c2 Forcing the exchange of bishops allows the white king to invade.

51...♘e7 52.♖e5 ♘c6 53.♖h5 ♗xc2 54.♔xc2



54...♔d6 55.♔b3 ♔e6 56.♔c4 ♔d6 57.♖h6+ ♔d7 58.♔c5 ♘e7 59.♔xb4 ♘d5+ 60.♔c4 ♘c7 61.♔c5 ♘e6+ If 61...♔c8, 62.♔c6 is winning.

62.♖xe6

1-0

I IMAGINE A CHILD

By Alexis Levitin

I learnt chess at age six from my father, Sergei Levitin, and my stepfather, the Russian émigré writer V.S. Yanovsky. My father was born in Smolensk, my stepfather in Poltava, on the road from Kharkiv to Kyiv. There are some people, even today in the midst of the war and devastation, still playing chess in Ukraine.

For me, chess has always been a joyously drawn-out delight where game and surroundings merge like a mellow mixed drink. I have happy memories of long hours of combat in dark bar rooms on Rue Jacob. I remember the comforting dim light of Vesuvio's, just across from San Francisco's famous City Lights Bookstore, where, in late afternoon, elderly chess players would come drifting in for a game and a beer. I remember the old Chess Forum in Greenwich Village, with its luxuriant long-haired cat curled on the counter and an occasional glimpse of Reshevsky or Lombardy. I remember brisk games in autumn in Washington Square, relaxed games in a busy playground in Rio's Copacabana, serious matches in the sprawling park of Budapest or the smaller park of Lodz. I remember the weight of the giant MegaChess pieces in outdoor games in lakeside Konstanz and central Stockholm.

But since the pandemic swept down upon us all two years ago, I have retreated to a prudent life of isolation. And so, seeing no one in the flesh, travelling to nowhere, hearing no foreign tongues, so attractive in their mystery, I must be satisfied with the merely virtual pleasures made available by our cybernetic world. Safe in my familiar bedroom, as winter snow melts into mud outside my window and blue jays and cardinals return to the feeder on my deck, I play impersonal games with chess players from around the world. My unknown opponents come from Indonesia, India, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Scotland. I play them all in the utter quiet between midnight and dawn. But for most of them, it is already morning, perhaps even noon. Playing chess, however, they are almost certainly hidden in a comfortable indoor twilight, with the only brightness coming from the computer screen.

Late last night, for the first time, I find myself playing an opponent from Ukraine. Or perhaps, in the midst of the current cruelty and chaos, it is simply the first time that I have noticed the little flag of the beleaguered country. I feel guilty, ashamed of my easy comfort, my lifelong safety. When have I ever been in danger? The last battle where I live occurred towards the end of the War of 1812, well over two hundred years ago.

I imagine a child in a wasteland, huddled over his computer screen, as reverberations from shelling shake his building. He shudders and concentrates, building a careful defence on the chessboard, while shock waves come rolling from the outskirts of his city. He sips from the last of the orange juice his mother left for him earlier in the morning. Perhaps he nibbles nervously on a crust of toast, a slice of cheese. He clings to the order on the board; his defence, for the moment, seems solid, the thunder is still distant. And then, almost with reluctance, I see a midgame miscalculation. He advances, forking two of my pieces, but I ignore his threat and open a diagonal. He gobbles up my knight, but my queen swoops down the diagonal and takes his rook with a check. He had never castled. Three moves later it is over. I feel terrible. He asks for a second game. I accept.

Now he has White and, for a long time, he plays a good game. I make a mistake and his rook wins a pawn on an open file. My king must retreat and I'm a pawn down. I find a relatively safe square for my king, but the aggressive rook wins another pawn. I find an even safer spot for my king and hastily he gobbles up a third pawn. I feel triumphant and terrible as I make the decisive move, forking his king and his desperately hungry rook. He plays on, but it is hopeless. I win as I must.

I check the box for "Good Game". I ask him to become a "Friend". I send him a brief note, saying "I hope you are safe."

I wish I could invite him to the warmth and peace of my comfortable old house, transporting him through Chess.com.

If only he could enter that virtual portal, gulping down the last of his orange juice, while declaring with confidence "Beam me up, Scotty, beam me up!".

If only I could press a magic button, drawing him instantaneously through cyberspace, plucking him from the surface of his ravaged land and welcoming him to a new home.

If only I could put my arm over his shoulder, lead him to the kitchen, and offer him a plate of scrambled eggs with three slices of bacon and a mug of hot chocolate to the side.

If only I could lead him, then, to my spare bedroom, quiet and orderly, where he could lie down on his own bed, within clean flannel sheets, beneath woolen blankets from Ecuador, and drift off into a healing sleep, to the murmur of the snowmelt river of early spring, flowing softly by beyond his window.

If only.

DIMENSIONS OF CONFLICT

By Peter O’Brien

Following our editorial in the March issue titled ‘On Chess and War’, Peter O’Brien writes about the words relevant for both chess and war, their intrinsic overlaps and the dangers of misinterpretations

In a world where technology allows so much to be fine-grained, so much to be rendered precise, traceable and calculated, words are alas treated in very opposite ways. So it is with “war” and “chess”. Each tends to be considered as a single entity, and facile comparisons are made between the two. A few seconds’ thought, not to mention a cursory look at what actually happens, should be enough to prevent us from falling into the trap. The following hyper-short glossary is intended as a guide to avoid the trap, and an invitation to multidimensionality. It scarcely needs saying that the current Ukraine conflict has prompted what follows.

As glossaries normally do, I’ll follow an alphabetical order. It’s just a convention, slightly disguising the multiple connections between the words. To economise on space, I leave to the reader all cross-referencing and composition of full sentences. Evaluation of the whole is a task for history.

ADVERSARIES

Whether in wars or in chess games, there are often far more than two involved. The difference is in the stability. A chess match might have two individuals against each other, or offer two groups of players where there is private consultation within each group before a move is made. Historically, some famous games involved an eminent player being challenged by a group acting in mutual consultation. The key, however, is that once the starting players have been nominated, they stay the same throughout the game. And the same result will apply to all involved. This is very frequently not the case in wars. Wars can start with alliances among belligerents. But the composition of alliances can undergo radical changes. For instance, during both of what have been called “world wars”, the number of large-scale participants altered. In both conflicts, Italy began with what turned out to be the losing alliance, and finished up linked with the victors. Flexibility matters!

CONSEQUENCES

The end of a single chess game is quite strictly defined. There can be checkmate, stalemate, perpetual check, repetition of moves, a player can resign, or they may overstep the time limit. Chess games and tournaments produce results – winners, losers, prize winners, impacts on world rankings, qualification for subsequent money-spinning events. Once an event is completed, all these consequences are known more or less immediately. Moreover, and very importantly, the same chess pieces can be set up on the same board for the start of the next game. Wars are utterly different. True, there might be documents misleadingly labelled “peace treaties”, which in fact often contain the seeds of the next conflicts. These documents will almost always alter many configurations, including country boundaries, the status of various groups of people, financial and trade arrangements. Depending on the kind of war fought, a consequence could well be the establishment of international institutions (UN bodies and the EU are well-known examples). These consequences are often not apparent straight after a war, and might take years to occur. In short, while chess is self-contained over time, wars are generally open-ended processes.

MEDIA

Some 30 years ago, a close friend of mine edited a splendid book called “The Media Goes to War”. His introduction talked about such things as “embedding of journalists” with the US Army in Iraq, and there were 35 chapters where media specialists from around the globe discussed how that war had been perceived in their countries – and how those perceptions had been influenced by the media. Since at least the American Civil war, photos, films, narrative, interviews and the rest have played a huge role in harnessing support for, or popular resistance to, wars of all sorts, civil included.

Right now, Ukraine is the theatre for a media war of immense proportions. Radically divergent narratives are spread, means of communication are censored, careful contextualising of the conflict is a commodity in very short supply. In the chess world, the role of the media is very much a recent phenomenon. In its countless forms, media has contributed enormously to popularising the game. Whereas in wars media is a vital but highly disputed player, in chess it is now an asset.

MEMORIES

This is a critical word. No serious chess player can survive without an excellent memory. While computer databases can provide all previous games that may be of relevance to a player, it is ultimately the player who will have to recall and use that information. Wars can be started because the power of memory may be modified by time and changing perceptions. That memory can invigorate the efforts made during violent conflicts. It can, directly or indirectly, persuade persons, groups and States to enter wars.

OBJECTIVES

In chess and in war, the aims can be multi-dimensional and can change over time (meaning both in the immediate and in the longer terms). For chess, an individual constantly reevaluates the chances in a game, and at certain points may decide to settle for a draw rather than take too many risks seeking the win. Where a game is being played in a team competition, the person may ask the team captain whether to play for a win, settle for a draw or simply continue playing while the captain evaluates the overall team situation. In war, the shifting of objectives happens without interruption. Micro-objectives, such as the capture or rendition of a city, are under ceaseless monitoring. Macro-objectives, however, can also shift noticeably since time counts.

Just as I write these lines, the Russian Foreign Minister accuses Ukraine of repeatedly altering what it wants in negotiations (blaming this on US manipulations), while he claims that Russia has always told the same story. The time horizon is for sure much longer for war objectives. They have to be sustainable, meaning that the belligerent has enough resources to hold on to what they gain.

RULES

Chess laws are now stable, well known and accepted, and administered by FIDE and tournament organisers alike. Their application can, however, be influenced by outside events. Thus COVID and the risks it posed meant that Danil Dubov could not play all his games in the recent Wijk Aan Zee tournament, a somewhat unusual occurrence where a player was effectively disqualified, but not for breaking the rules of chess per se.

The Ukraine conflict itself has led to important FIDE decisions, including the disbarment of Sergey Karjakin from participation in the Madrid candidates tournament due to certain behaviour relating to the Ukraine war.

The rules of war have a very different status. International laws, such as agreements not to engage in most kinds of chemical warfare, have been signed by many countries. There is, nevertheless, no shortage of solid information to indicate that chemical warfare has taken place in several continents in very recent years. Similarly, humanitarian law designed to ensure that ordinary people should have some minimum protection when wars are going on around them has likewise been much abused.

These notes have been written to give a glimpse into how easily the use of words without nuance can lead to highly misleading comparisons and conclusions. Both chess and war are dense fields, with long histories but many divergent and indeed radically different meanings assigned to what has happened. Whatever you are involved in, the abilities to listen, observe and analyse are of immense value. Yet beware of facile translation of outcomes in one field to those in another. Those are minefields, and they are always dangerous.

THE 27TH 4NCL HARROGATE CONGRESS

By IM Shaun Taulbut

The 4NCL resumed its over the Board Congresses with its 27th tournament at the Old Swan Hotel in Harrogate, a popular event with a strong field.

This was a five-round event, and the top two - Keith Arkell and Brandon Clarke - did not play each other.

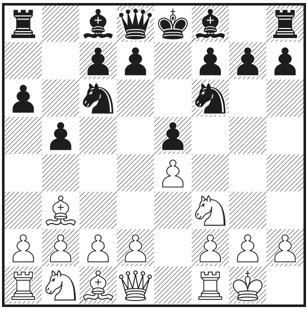
Here are two interesting games from the event.

First, we'll look at a clear strategic win from Brandon Clarke.

Brandon **Clarke** - Michael **Stokes**

27th 4NCL Congress 2022 Harrogate ENG (1.1)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 b5 6.♗b3



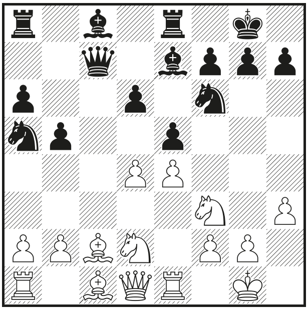
6...♗e7 6...♗b7 is an alternative here as 7.♘g5 d5 8.exd5 ♘d4 is playable for Black.

7.&e1 0-0 8.c3 d6 Transposing back to a Closed Ruy Lopez; instead, possible is 8...♗b7 9.d4 d6 or 8...d5 9.exd5 ♘xd5 10.♘xe5 ♘xe5 11.♖xe5 c6, with the famous Marshall Gambit.

9.h3 Preventing...♗g4 is perhaps the most solid choice.

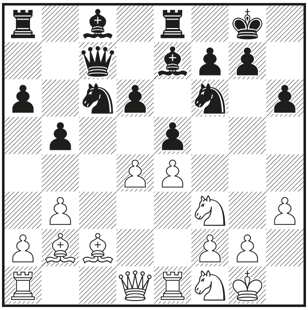
9...♘a5 10.♗c2 c5 11.d4 ♕c7 The Chigorin Defence.

12.♘bd2 cxd4 13.cxd4 ♖e8



14.♘f1 White aims to position his knight on e3 or g3.

14...h6 15.b3 ♘c6 16.♗b2

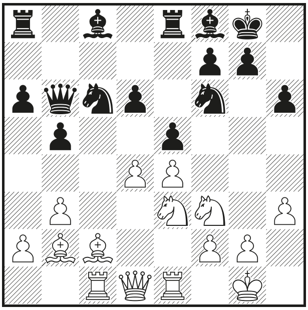


Now White has a slight edge as he can put his queen's rook on c1 on the open file opposite the black queen.

16...♗f8 If 16...♘b4 17.♗b1 ♘c6 18.♘e3 is better for White.

17.♖c1 Indirectly attacking the black queen, so Black decides to move out of the line of fire.

17...♕b6 18.♘e3



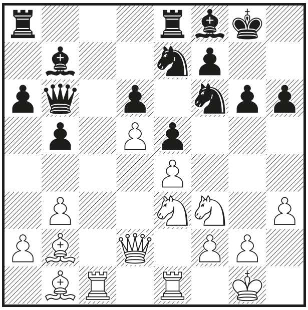
White is better as his knight can go to d5 in some variations with effect.

18...g6 18...exd4 19.♘xd4 is better for White but maybe the best for Black here.

19.♗b1 19.♘d5 ♘xd5 *(19...♕d8 20.♗b1 ♗b7 21.♘xf6+ ♕xf6 22.d5 ♘e7 23.♖c7 is also very bad for Black)* 20.exd5 is much better for White as Black loses the pawn on e5.

19...♗b7 20.d5 White takes a space advantage and his minor pieces have much more freedom.

20...♘e7 21.♕d2



White prepares ♗c3 with a grip on b4 and a5.

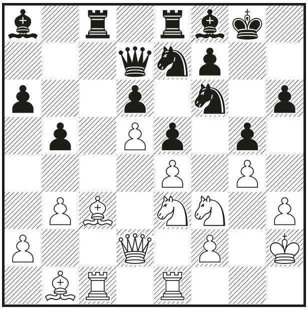
21...♖ac8 After 21...a5 22.a4 bxa4 23.♘c4 ♕d8 24.bxa4 ♗a6 25.♗d3 White has a big advantage.

22.♗c3 White has a solid grip on the queenside dark squares.

22...♗a8 23.g3 23.♗a5 ♕b8 is also good for White.

23...♕d8 24.♔h2 ♕d7 25.g4 White has the plan of ♖g1 and a kingside attack.

25...g5

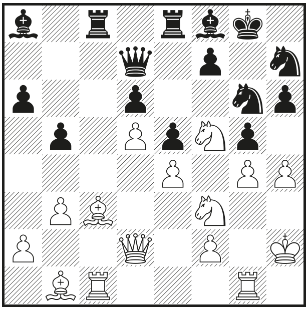


Black decides to try to block the kingside; 25...♗g7 is best waiting.

26.♖g1 White now plans to break through with h4.

26...♘g6 27.h4 ♘h7 27...♘xh4 28.♘xh4 gxh4 29.g5 hxg5 30.♖xg5+ $h8 31.♘f5 White is winning; 27...gxh4 28.♘f5 ♔h7 29.g5 hxg5 30.♕xg5, with a decisive attack.

28.♘f5



The white knight dominates the position.

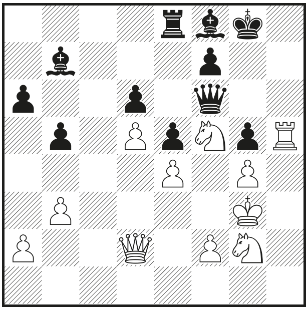
28...♘f4 Black also has this outpost but White can nullify its effect, whereas the white knight on f5 is difficult for Black.

29.♔g3 White aims to play down the h-file after hxg5.

29...♕c7 30.♗d3 Preventing the knight from coming to e2 in some variations after exchanges on c1.

30...gxh4+ 31.♘3xh4 ♕d8 32.♘g2 ♘xd3 If 32...♘xg2 33.♔xg2 ♕g5 34.f3 ♘f6 35.♖h1 ♕xd2+ 36.♗xd2 the black h-pawn falls.

33.♕xd3 ♕g5 34.♗d2 ♕f6 35.♖h1 ♘g5 36.♖h5 ♖xc1 37.♗xc1 ♗b7 38.♗xg5 hxg5 39.♕d2



The double attack on g5 is decisive and the black bishops are poor defenders in this blocked position.

39...♗e7 40.♖h6 Trapping and winning the queen.

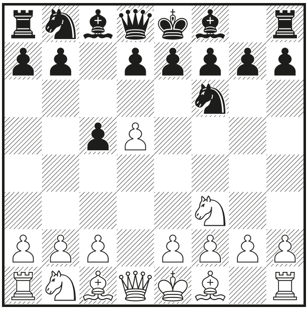
1-0

Keith Arkell won the tournament but had a tough struggle in his first game after obtaining a winning position from the opening.

Keith **Arkell** – Joshua **Pink**]

27th 4NCL Congress 2022 Harrogate ENG (1.3)

1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 c5 3.d5



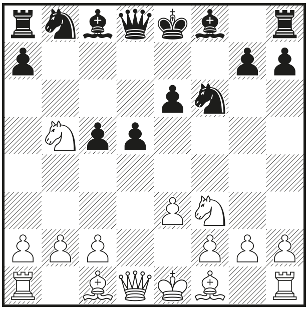
Transposing into a Benoni-type position is strongest for White.

3...e6 4.♘c3 4.c4 is normal but 4.♘c3 has its good points and is less well known.

4...b5 Sacrificing a pawn for play in the centre; 4...exd5 5.♘xd5 ♘c6 6.e4 ♘xe4 *(6...d6 7.♗d3 ♗e7 8.0-0 0-0)* 7.♗c4, with strong play.

5.dxe6 fxe6 6.♘xb5 6.e4 b4 7.♘b5 ♘xe4 8.♗d3 ♗b7 9.♗f4 gives White strong play as well.

6...d5 7.e3



Black has compensation for the sacrificed pawn.

7...a6 8.♘c3 ♗d6 8...♘c6 looks best here.

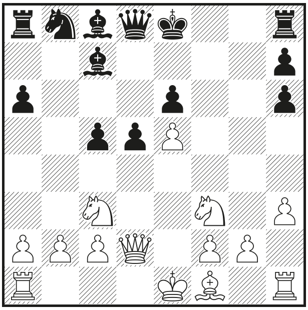
9.e4 A strong reply, breaking open the centre.

9...♗c7 If 9...dxe4 10.♘g5 is much better for White; or, if 9...d4 10.e5, White is much better; 9...♘c6 10.exd5 exd5 11.♘xd5 0-0 12.♘xf6+ ♕xf6 13.♕d5+ ♕e6+ 14.♕xe6+ ♗xe6 15.♘g5 ♗d5 16.♗e3 is also good for White.

10.e5 ♘g4 10...♘g8 may be best as now the black kingside is broken up.

11.h3 ♘h6 11...♘xe5 12.♘xe5 ♗xe5 13.♕h5+ wins.

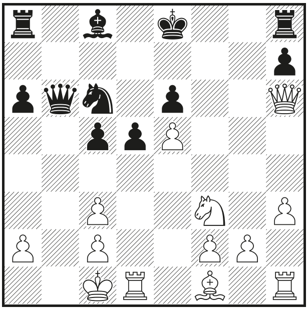
12.♗xh6 gxh6 13.♕d2



White captures the pawn on h6 after wrecking the black kingside.

13...♗a5 14.♕xh6 ♕b6 If 14...d4 15.♕h5+ ♔e7 16.0-0-0 ♗xc3 17.bxc3, with a winning advantage, eg: 17...♕a5 18.cxd4 ♕a3+ 19.♔d2 ♘c6 20.d5 exd5 21.♕g5+ ♔e8 22.♕f6 ♖f8 *(22...♕b4+ 23.c3 ♕b2+ 24.♔e3 ♕xc3+ 25.♗d3 d4+ 26.♔e2 winning)* 23.♕xc6+.

15.0-0-0 ♗xc3 16.bxc3 ♘c6

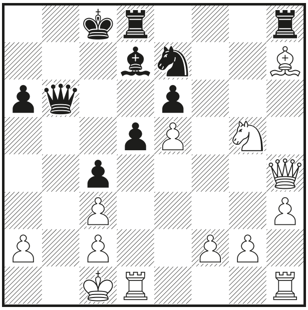


17.♗d3 Not the sharpest. 17.♘g5 is winning, eg 17...♕c7 *(17...♘xe5 18.♕f6 ♘g6 19.♗d3 ♖f8 20.♗xg6+ hxg6 21.♕xg6+ ♔e7 22.♖xd5 exploiting the pin of the e-pawn)* 18.f4 ♘d8 19.♗e2: the key move, coming to h5; 19...♕e7 20.f5 exf5 21.♖xd5 ♘f7 22.♗h5 ♖f8 23.e6 is crushing.

17...♗d7 If 17...c4 18.♗g6+.

18.♕h4 18.♘g5 ♘xe5 19.♖he1 ♘xd3+ 20.♖xd3 0-0-0 21.♘f7 c4 22.♖d4 ♖he8 23.♘xd8 ♕xd8 24.f4 ♕a5 25.♔d2 ♕xa2 26.♕xh7 is winning; 18.♗g6+ ♔d8 19.♕g7 ♔c7 20.♗f7 is very good for White.

18...♘e7 19.♘g5 c4 20.♗xh7 0-0-0



Black has castled, so now White has a more difficult task to win.

21.♕d4 ♕a5 22.♕e3 22.f4 ♘c6 23.♕e3 ♕a3+ 24.♔d2 should win for White.

22...♖xh7 23.♘xh7 ♘f5 A good practical sacrifice of the exchange, presenting White with difficulties in exploiting his advantage.

24.♕f3 ♕a4 25.a3 25.♘g5 ♕xa2 26.♔d2 is winning here.

25...♕xa3+ 26.♔d2 ♕a2 A mistake.

27.♖c1 White wins with 27.♖a1 ♕b2 28.♖hb1 ♘d4 29.♖xb2 ♘xf3+ 30.gxf3 ♗b5 31.♘f6.

27...♗a4 28.♖he1 28.♘g5 d4 *(28...♘g7 29.♘f7 ♖d7 30.♕f6 ♘e8 31.♕xe6 ♘c7 32.♘d6+ ♔b8 33.♖b1+ ♗b3 34.♕xd7 ♕xc2+ 35.♔e3 ♕xc3+ 36.♔f4 ♕d4+ 37.♔f3 ♕d3+ 38.♔g4 ♕g6+ 39.♔h4 ♕h6+ 40.♔g3 ♕g5+ 41.♔f3* wins) 29.♕a8+ ♔d7 *(29...♔c7 30.♘xe6+* wins) 30.♕b7+ ♔e8 31.♕f7#.

28...♔b8 29.♖ed1 29.♘g5 still wins, eg 29...d4 30.♖b1+ ♗b3 31.♔e2 ♕xc2+ 32.♔f1 dxc3 33.♘xe6 is winning.

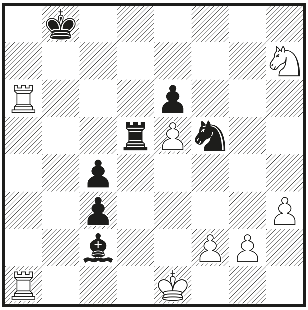
29...d4 30.♔e1 30.♖b1+ ♗b5 *(30...♗b3 31.♔e2 ♕xc2+ 32.♔f1 ♘g3+ 33.♕xg3 ♕xh7 34.cxd4 wins)* 31.♔e1 ♕xc2 32.♖dc1 ♕a2 33.♘g5 is possible here.

30...♗xc2 31.♖a1 31.♖d2 d3 32.♕c6 is also possible.

31...♕b2 32.♖xa6 ♖d5 Stopping White's threats; now the game is difficult.

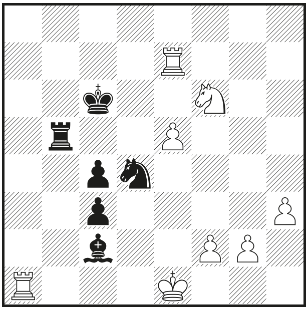
33.♖da1 If 33.♘f6 ♗xd1 34.♘xd5 *(34.♕xd1 ♖b5 is equal)* 34...♗xf3 wins for Black.

33...♕xc3+ 34.♕xc3 dxc3



Black has counterplay with his c-pawns but White ploughs on.

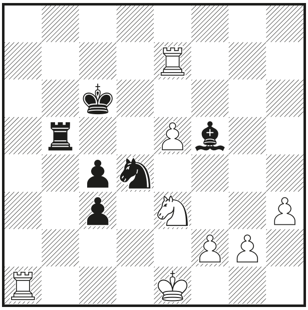
35.♖xe6 ♘d4 36.♖e8+ ♔b7 37.♘f6 ♖b5 38.♖e7+ ♔c6



39.♘g4 39.♖a6+ ♔c5 40.♖c7+ ♔b4 41.♖b6 ♖xb6 42.♘d5+ ♔b3 43.♘xb6 is best here, with an unclear position.

39...♗f5 39...♖b2 or 39...♗d3 is good for Black when White must fight for a draw.

40.♘e3 Now White is back on top.



40...c2 41.♖a6+ ♔c5 42.♖c7+ ♔b4 43.♖xc4+ ♔b3 44.♔d2 Stopping the pawn.

44...♖xe5 45.♖xd4 ♖c5 46.♖b6+ ♔a3 47.♔c1

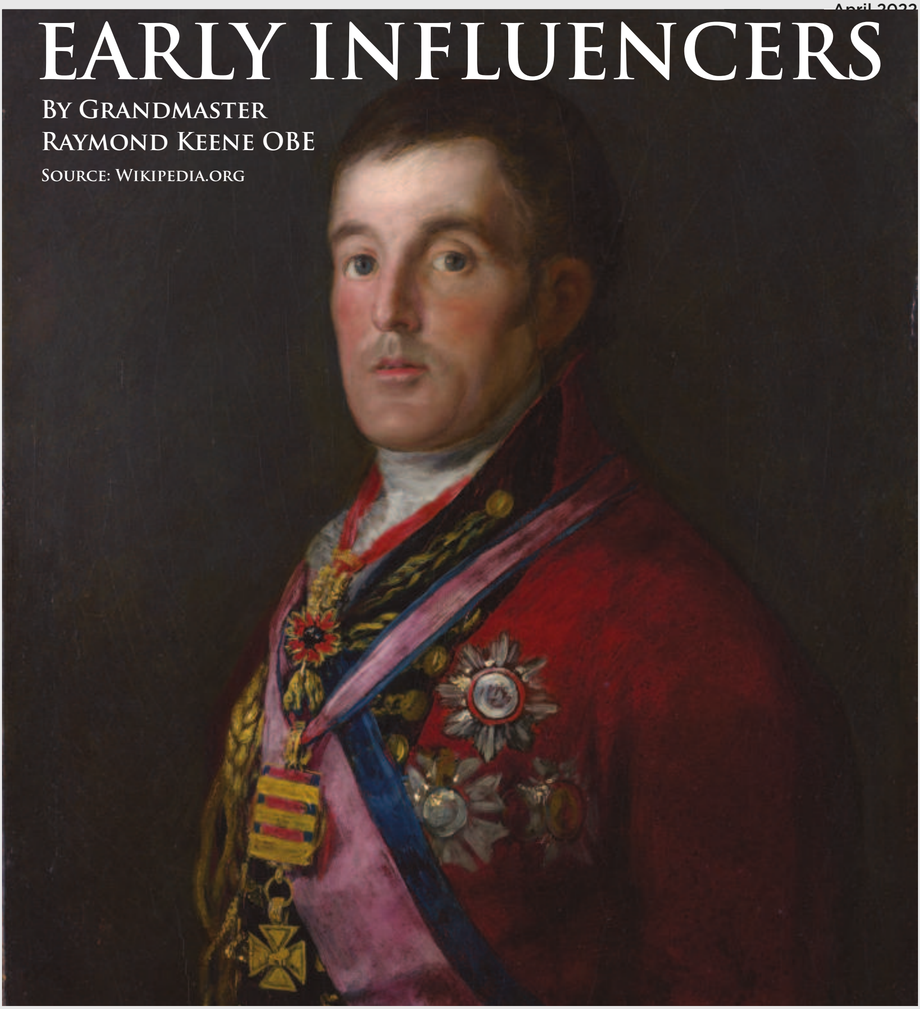
1-0

27th 4NCL Congress 2022 Harrogate ENG Fri 21st Jan 2022 - Sun 23rd Jan 2022
Leading Final Round 5 Standings:

Rk	SNo	NAME	Ti	FED	Rtg	TB1
1	3	Arkell Keith C	GM	ENG	2454	4.5
2	1	Clarke Brandon G I	IM	ENG	2502	4.0
	4	Willow Jonah B	FM	ENG	2425	4.0
	7	Derakhshani Borna	FM	ENG	2404	4.0
	15	Onslow Alfie		ENG	2237	4.0
	16	Smith Andrew Philip	FM	IRL	2203	4.0
7	5	Wells Peter K	GM	ENG	2423	3.5
	13	Sedykh Mikhail		ENG	2249	3.5
9	6	Hunt Harriet V	IM	ENG	2413	3.0
	8	Jones Steven A		ENG	2343	3.0
	10	Bradbury Neil H	IM	ENG	2310	3.0
	11	Makkar Rajat	CM	FRA	2301	3.0
	12	Townsend M Paul		ENG	2283	3.0
	14	Wilks Simon		ENG	2242	3.0
	18	Burnett Andrew	FM	SCO	2183	3.0
	21	Stubbs Oliver		ENG	2085	3.0
	22	Eagleton Greg T		ENG	2078	3.0

EARLY INFLUENCERS

By Grandmaster Raymond Keene OBE



Source: Wikipedia.org

The Duke of Wellington, the conqueror of Napoleon, was in fact one of my schoolboy heroes and I tried to model my early chess style on his campaigns, especially the strategic retreat after the Battle of Bussaco and the defensive genius behind the lines of Torres Vedras. It was here, outside Lisbon, that Wellington impaled the army of the French Marshal Masséna.

This month's first game is one of my own, where I sought to translate Wellington's military tactics into a chessboard interpretation.

"*All the business of war, and indeed all the business of life, is to endeavour to find out what you don't know, by what you do; that's what I called* - *guessing what was at the other side of the hill.*" - The Duke of Wellington.

The other influencers, as we shall see, were the strategic guru Aron Nimzowitsch and the Red Czar of Soviet Chess, Mikhail Botvinnik.

G K **Sandiford** - Raymond **Keene**

Dulwich College Dulwich,
London ENG, 1961

1.e4 ♘c6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 f6 One of Nimzowitsch's more extreme ideas, which is far more challenging than 3...♗f5.

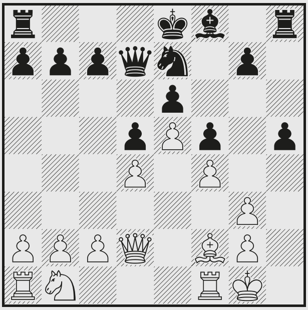
4.f4 ♗f5 5.♘e2 ♕d7 6.♘g3 ♗g4 7.♗e2 ♗xe2 As so often in this defence, the trade of light-squared bishops furthers Black's aims rather than White's.

8.♘xe2 e6 9.♗e3 ♘ge7 Almost imperceptibly, Black has gained tangible influence over the centre, and White's remaining dark-squared bishop is seriously restricted by its own pawns.

10.0-0 ♘f5 11.♕d2 h5 This strategically valuable advance of Black's h-pawn plays a vital role.

12.♘g3 A common factor in this opening is that White simply cannot tolerate the continued presence of the black knight on f5 and therefore accepts doubled pawns in order to eliminate it. However, White's doubled pawns on the g-file represent an attractive target for Black's further attack, by means of ...h5-h4.

12...♘xg3 13.hxg3 ♘e7 14.♗f2 f5

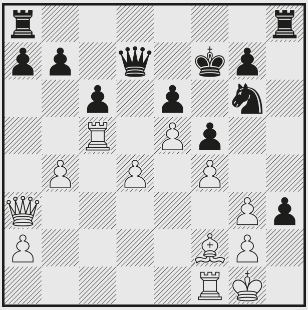


Black no longer requires the f5-square for his knight. It is more important to fix White's g3-pawn as a weakness in preparation for the line-opening attack ...h5-h4.

15.♘a3 ♘g6 16.♕d3 ♔f7 A vital step in connecting Black's rooks. The king is safer on f7 than it would be after ...O-O-O.

17.c4 ♗xa3 18.♕xa3 h4 The final attack commences. There is no need to risk the opening of the position after 18...dxc4.

19.cxd5 ♕xd5 20.♖ac1 c6 21.♖c5 ♕d7 22.b4 h3



White's demonstration on the other wing comes too late. There is really no defence to Black's numerous options on the h-file. 23.♕f3! is the sole try.

23.gxh3 ♖xh3 24.♕c1 ♖ah8 The immediate 24...b6 wins more quickly.

25.b5 ♘e7 26.♔g2 b6! This elegant move, somewhat overdue, now gains control of the vital d5 square for Black's queen.

27.bxc6 ♘xc6 28.♖xc6 ♕d5+ leads to checkmate, while after 28.♖b5 ♘e7 (or 28...♘xd4) White also loses control of the long light-squared diagonal.

0-1

The second game this month comes from the same period and also shows an early inspiration and influence, namely the game Botvinnik vs Gligoric, Moscow Olympiad 1956. The key is the early thrust of the h-pawn which comes across as surprising in a closed opening, such as this line of the English.

Raymond **Keene** - John N **Sugden**

U–14 Championship Dulwich College, London, 1961

Notes based on those by Ray Bott and Stanley Morrison from the book Junior Chess Games.

1.c4 ♘f6 A game between two young players who had met over-the-board on many previous occasions. It was due to these continual battles with J.N. Sugden that Raymond Keene attributes his early chess development at Dulwich. In this particular game he takes effective advantage of Black's failure to contest the centre quickly. His opponent adopts a passive kind of King's Indian Defence, allowing a breakthrough against a castled king.

2.♘c3 g6 3.g3 ♗g7 4.♗g2 d6 5.d3 0-0 6.♗g5 e5 Stronger is 6...h6, driving away the bishop before White has the opportunity of playing ♕d2.

7.♕d2 Aiming to exchange the dark-squared bishop.

7...♘c6 8.h4 Signalling an immediate kingside assault.

8...♖e8 9.h5 ♘e7 If 9...gxh5 10.♖xh5!

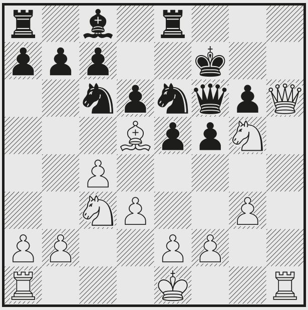
10.♗h6 ♘xh5 11.♗xg7 ♘xg7 Better would have been 11...♔xg7 12.♗f3 ♘f6 13.♕h6+ ♔g8 14.♘e4 ♘f5.

12.♕h6 The capture of White's pawn on h5 weakened Black's position further, by opening up the h-file for the action of White's queen and king's rook.

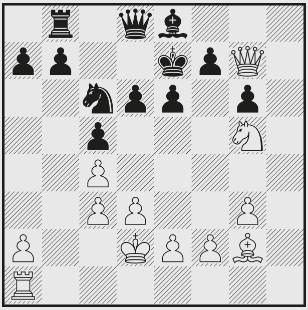
12...f5 13.♕xh7+ ♔f7 14.♘h3 ♘c6 Of course, not 14...♖h8? because of 15.♘g5+!

15.♕h6 Again threatening ♘g5+.

15...♘e6 16.♗d5 ♕f6 17.♘g5+.



The influential game between Botvinnik and Gligoric at the Moscow Olympiad (1956) had proceeded: 1.c4 g6 2.g3 c5 3.♗g2 ♗g7 4.♘c3 ♘c6 5.♘f3 ♘h6 6.h4 d6 7.d3 ♖b8 8.h5 ♗d7 9.♗xh6 ♗xh6 10.hxg6 hxg6 11.♕c1 ♗g7 12.♖xh8+ ♗xh8 13.♕h6 ♗xc3+ 14.bxc3 e6 15.♘g5 ♔e7 16.♔d2 ♗e8 17.♕g7 (see following diagram) In fact this is premature and should have been preceded by 17.f4. Now Black could have reacted with the surprise shot 17...♘d4!! meeting 18.cxd4 with ...♕a5+ when Botvinnik would have faced unexpected problems.



17...♔e7 18.♕h7+ If 18...♕g7 19.♘xe6! or 18...♔d8 19.♘f7+! or 18...♔f8 19.♕h8+! ♕xh8 20.♖xh8+ ♔e7 21.♖xe8+ ♔xe8 22.♘xe6.

18...♘g7 19.♗f7 If the rook moves then 20.♘d5+!

19...♕xg5 20.♕xg7 For if 20...♖d8 21.♗g8+ ♔e8 22.♕f7 mate.

1-0

QUOTES AND QUERIES

Dedication to the **FRENCH DEFENCE**

By Alan Smith

6216 The French Defence repays dedication, not dabbling. The late Wolfgang Uhlmann played the opening throughout his long career and reached the Candidates level. He played the Winawer variation and defeated Fischer, Stein and Bronstein with that.

Chess historian and correspondence IM Mike Conroy has been a devotee of the defence for over 60 years. Here are some examples of his play.

One of Black's problems in the French Defence is deciding when it is safe to win the white pawn on e5. The capture is often double-edged as it changes the nature of the position. In the following game, Mike Conroy bides his time, but when he does finally take on e5, it is with dramatic effect.

T. **Haslam** - M. J. **Conroy**

Correspondence, 1980

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.e5 c5 5.a3 5.♗d2 is very solid.

5...♗xc3+ 6.bxc3 ♘e7 7.♕g4 ♕c7 8.♗d3 cxd4 9.♘e2 This gambit was introduced in Geller -Sokolsky USSR ch 1950, but did not catch on for a while.

9...dxc3 10.♕xg7 ♖g8 11.♕xh7 ♘bc6 12.♗f4 ♗d7 13.0–0 0–0–0 14.♕xf7? This is not logical, 14.♗g3 ♘xe5 15.♖fe1 is better but Black held the balance after 15...♖de8 16.♕h4 f5 Cardelli - Conroy correspondence 1997.

14...♖df8 15.♕h5 ♘f5 16.♘g3 ♖h8 17.♕e2 This holds e5, but allows Black to gain an important tempo.

17...♘cd4 18.♕e1 ♘h4 19.♕e3 19.♔h1? ♘hf3.

19...♘df3+! 20.gxf3 d4 21.♕c1 ♕xe5!! 22.♘f5 22.♗xe5 loses to 22...♘xf3+ 23.♔g2 ♖xh2 #

22...♘xf3+ 23.♔g2 ♖xh2+ 24.♔xf3 ♗c6+ 25.♔g3 ♖g2+ 26.♔h4 ♖h8+ 27.♘h6 ♖xh6+ 28.♗xh6 ♕h2 #

0–1

The Poisoned Pawn variation of the Winawer is the sharpest and most contentious line.

I. **Ishii** - M. J. **Conroy**

12th Postal Olympiad, 1992

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.e5 c5 5.a3 ♗xc3+ 6.bxc3 ♘e7 7.♕g4 ♕c7 8.♕xg7 ♖g8 9.♕xh7 cxd4 10.♘e2 ♘bc6 11.f4 dxc3 12.♕d3 ♗d7 13.♕xc3 A plausible alternative to the main line 13.♘xc3, which Spassky, Karpov and Korchnoi all used with success.

13...♘f5 14.♖b1 d4 15.♕d3 0–0–0 16.♖g1 f6 17.g4 ♘h4 Improving on 17... Nh6 Balashov - Kosten Minsk 1986.

18.exf6 e5 19.g5?! White has better: 19.f7 ♖xg4 20.♖xg4 ♗xg4 Camilleri - Conroy correspondence 1997.

19...e4! A novelty.

20.♕g3? A second mistake is all it takes to lose quickly, 20.♕xe4 ♗f5 21.♕h1 ♖ge8 also favours Black, Galov - Lenhergt 1993.

20...♘f3+ 21.♔f2 ♘a5 22.♖b2 e3+!

0–1

Not all French Defences are Winawers. Here White spends several tempi with his queen's knight, but neglects the defence of his king. This game from the Central Lancashire league features a speculative sacrifice.

D. **Miletic** - M.J. **Conroy**

Nelson - Burnley, 1992

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘d2 ♘c6 4.♘gf3 The accepted way of meeting the Guimard Variation, but Keres, Geller and Korchnoi all played 4.c3 with success.

4...♘f6 5.e5 ♘d7 6.♗e2 f6 7.exf6 ♕xf6 8.♘f1 ♗d6 This is an idea of Vaganjan's, instead of 8...e5.

9.♗g5 This is premature, 9.♘e3 is better; one example was 9...0-0 10.0-0 ♕g6 11.c4 ♘f6 12.g3 ♗d7 Garbarino - Short World Junior ch 1982.

9...♕f7 10.♘e3 ♘f6 11.♗xf6 This prevents ...♘e4 , but it is hardly an advert for White's ninth move.

11...♕xf6 12.0–0 0–0 13.g3 ♗d7 14.c3 ♖ae8 There is a case for 14...♖ad8.

15.♘e1 ♘e7 16.f4 g5 17.♘g4 ♕g7 18.♘e5 gxf4!? A bold piece sacrifice.

19.♘xd7 fxg3 20.♘xf8 20.♖xf8+ ♖xf8 21.♘xf8 runs into 21...gxh2+ 22.♔h1 ♕g1#

20...gxh2+ 21.♔h1 Avoiding 21.♔f2? ♕g3 #

21...♘f5 22.♕d3 The knight is immune from capture, because of ...♕g1#

22...♖xf8 23.♘g2 23.♘f3 is even worse: 23...♘g3+ 24.♔g2 ♘xf1+ 25.♔xf1 ♕g1#.

23...♘g3+ 24.♕xg3 White had to give up his queen: 24.♔xh2 ♕h6+ 25.♘h4 ♕xh4+ 26.♔g2 ♘xf1.

24...♕xg3 the rest is straightforward. White eventually rounds up the intruder on h2, but loses most of his pawns on the way.

25.♖xf8+ ♔xf8 26.♖f1+ ♔e7 27.♗f3 ♔d7 28.♘e1 ♕g5 29.♗g2 ♕d2 30.♘f3 ♕xb2 31.♘xh2 ♗xh2 32.♔xh2 ♕xc3

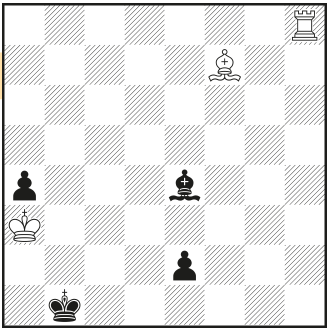
0–1

At first, I thought Black's play was sound, but then I spotted the resource 20.h3 and I began to have my doubts. After further analysis, I was able to resolve these: 20.h3 ♖f2 21.♗g4 ♘g6 22.♘c5 ♖ef8! 23.♗e2 ♘f4 24.♗g4 ♖xf1+ 25.♔xf1 ♘xh3+ 26.♗f3 g2+! 27.♘xg2 ♕g3! and Black wins.

Endgame Studies

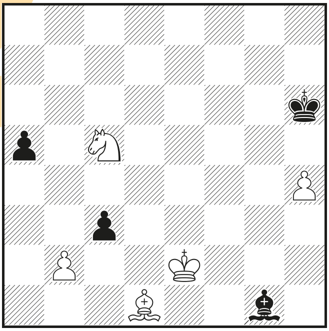
by Ian Watson
ian@irwatson.uk

1



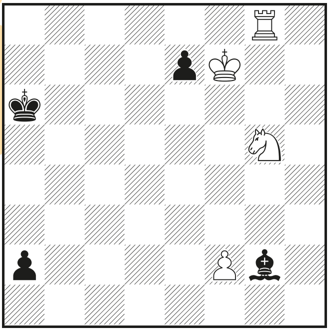
Y. Vilner
Odessa News 1913
DRAW

2



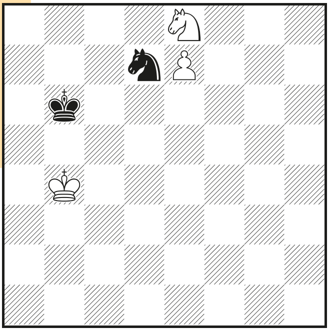
T. Gorgiev
Shakhmaty v SSSR 1936
WIN

3



F. Bondarenko
Shakhmaty v SSSR 1936
DRAW

4



V. Halberstadt
Gros 1937
DRAW

Celebrating Ukrainian chess composers

As I write, Britain is getting ready to receive large numbers of refugees from Ukraine. Our task is not only to house, feed and clothe them, but also to make them feel welcome and to help them join into our society. Many will be chess players; Ukraine has one of the richest of chess traditions. We can gain as well as give, and I expect we will see Ukrainian chess players contributing to our chess clubs and chess events. So, this month, I want to celebrate the skills of Ukrainian chess composers, by presenting four endgame studies by Ukrainian composers.

There are many names of chess players born in the Ukraine that are familiar to us. Ivanchuk has been one of the strongest players of this century. You may not know that some of the leading Ukrainian GMs of last century also composed studies; Bronstein and Rossolimo, for example. (Nicolas Rossolimo was born in Kiev, later emigrating and playing for France and then the USA.). One of the most prolific of all chess writers, Irving Chernev, born in Ukraine, wrote extensively about studies. In my column, I have often presented endgame studies by modern Ukrainian composers; for example, just last month Tarasiuk, and also recently Didukh and Stavrietsky. And of course, the greatest modern master of the pawn endgame, Mikhail Zinar, who died last year. I cannot list all the Ukrainian study composers, or this column would be entirely filled with names!

We begin with a less familiar name, Yakov Vilner, who mainly composed problems, but was also the first Ukrainian Chess Champion. Another strong Ukrainian composer, Sergei Tkachenko, has written a biography of him, in which we learn that Vilner saved Alexander Alekhine from the firing squad. This study is short and simple to solve, but neatly and concisely displays its theme.

Tigran Gorgiev composed over 600 studies, starting in his teenage years. This one was composed when he was 25. Filip Bondarenko rivalled Gorgiev in both output and quality, but it was an amicable rivalry: he and Gorgiev wrote ‘The Chess Study in Ukraine’ which was published in Kiev in 1966.

Vitaly Halberstadt was, like Rossolimo, a Ukrainian-born player and composer who emigrated to France; indeed, he won the Paris Championship in 1925. This study shows what became known as the ‘Halberstadt Theme’, in which there is a combination of White and Black zugzwang in endgames with bishop or knight versus bishop or knight plus a pawn on the seventh.

These studies are from the first age of chess composition in Ukraine; their endgame art has continued strongly ever since. I hope it will survive the current catastrophe.

The solutions are on page 255.

Openings for Amateurs

by Pete Tamburro; ptamburro@aol.com

AMATEUR PLAY IN PRACTICE

From knowing the theory to understanding the position

Having closely watched amateur play for sixty years, I've felt over the years that writing about it would help young players avoid the same mistakes my generation made in rising through the ranks of tournament play.

When I was coming up, all we had were half a dozen chess books and more experienced players at the club help us out by going over our games. Thus, there were two ways to learn: on your own by reading books of game collections and such or getting some good post-mortem advice from the fellow that just beat you or the aforementioned club player.

Today, we are awash in books. We have chess engines that tell us what we should have played but never why, except for some tactical sequence. After tournament games today, most young players just leave and head for their computer without even going over the game with their opponent, thus missing out on learning something and maybe even making a lifelong friend.

Young players memorise lines and come in booked-up without a smidgen of understanding as to why they're playing most of the moves. To that end, I've tried over the years, and in this column and my books, to be that experienced club player, albeit a geographically distant one who could be at your elbow to explain the why question in the openings and what happens after that and how it is all connected. One way I have been fond of is taking master games and making sense of them to average players.

With the column you are now reading, I'm picking an amateur game from our big team tournament. It was played in 2018. I had annotated it for our Atlantic Chess News Annual because it displayed where weaknesses in study became apparent during the game. Both players are today rated over 2000. Back then, White was a little over 1400 and Black was getting near to 2000. Their move choices highlighted certain key things. These were players that knew more than the average player, had ideas and could play chess with a decent degree of skill. This is not a master game, but it is the other way of being instructive. If you see a little bit of yourself at some point in the game, make a resolution to modify your behaviour at the board and your behaviour as to what and how you study.

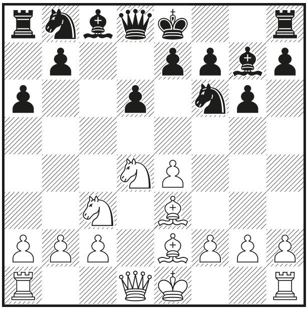
Roger **Zhang** - Nicholas **Oblak** [B73]

World Amateur Team Championship
Parsippany NJ, 2018

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 I teach my students the Accelerated Dragon, which requires 2...♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 g6 5.♘c3 ♗g7 I can't count the number of games where White is so busy setting up the typical anti-Dragon attack with castling long, playing f3 and h4 and getting the queen and bishop to line up on the c1-h6 diagonal, that they don't seem to get the fact that Black has not played d6. You will not infrequently see this: 6.♗e3 ♘f6 7.f3 0-0 8.♕d2, going their merry way into the standard attacking set-up; however, they are surprised by Black playing 8...d5! because Black had saved a move by not playing 2...d6. They played out a mechanical routine and found that one small change in fact changed everything.

3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 g6 5.♘c3 ♗g7 6.♗e3 ♘f6 7.♗e2 In contrast to our above sequence, here 7.f3 is an excellent choice. White picks a more conservative route, which is quite playable, and maybe even a clever idea because Black might be ready with a defence for the more popular line. 7...0-0 8.♕d2 ♘c6 9.g4 and now you find out how well your opponent knows theory if he plays 9...h5! A move popularised by Soltis that slows down that h5 attack.

7...a6?



Black shouldn't combine the Najdorf with the Dragon. This a6 move is condemned in more than one Sicilian book. White will be castling kingside, so a queenside pawn display won't be attacking a long-castled king. Black has to counter in the centre. Black should have just castled here.

8.0-0 Since Black wasted a tempo, White could have gotten frisky with f3; however, he has the short side castling plan in mind and goes about setting up for that.

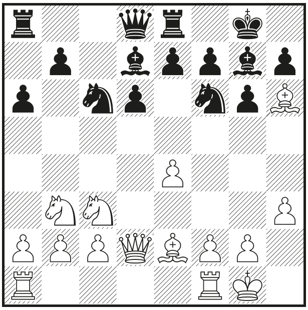
8...♘c6 9.h3?! The typical fear of having one's bishop attacked by a knight arises here. Get developed! Is Ng4 such a threat that White has to prevent it?

If 9.♕d2 ♘g4 10.♗xg4 ♗xg4 11.♘d5 0-0 12.c4 with some advantage in space and time, not to mention the now doing-nothing bishop on g4. If Black tries to kick the knight with e6, it makes d6 really weak.

9...0-0 10.♕d2 ♗d7 11.♘b3 Get the last remnant of your army into the game. You see so many games where the queen's rook just sits on a1. And why move the knight off d4? If Black exchanges, you've got a bishop countering the Dragon counterpart on g7. Black, indeed, can then play ♗c6 to hit the e4 pawn, but White can handle it: 11.♖ad1.

11...♖e8 No doubt Black saw this as a sophisticated anticipatory move for the coming ♗h6 (and it is a known strategy), but here it is utterly unnecessary. Since White has been dawdling instead of developing, Black should hit on the queenside by making use of that lamentable a6 move: 11...b5 12.a3 ♘e5 13.f4 ♘c4 14.♗xc4 bxc4 15.♘d4 ♖b8.

12.♗h6



So many amateurs are programmed to play certain patterns, like the queen and bishop battery pointing to h6. It's good against the Dragon if you're castled queenside and playing h4 with a rook on h1. Here, it's not as good because White has no army to attack with after the bishop exchange. Tip for young players: know why and when to play the moves you do. Much more in keeping with the demands of the position was 12.f4 b5 13.♗d3 ♖c8 14.♖ad1 ♘b4 15.e5, with some initiative on the kingside. These last few moves were the key transition period between the opening and middle game. Both sides have wandered off course a bit. It reveals to me a lack of playing over lots of games in this line just to get ideas and see opening plans evolve into middle-game plans. They are not separate. Yet, so many times average players get through their opening book and then don't know what to do. I dealt with that in both Openings for Amateurs books. I dubbed it the "ten move rule". Somewhere around move ten, average players reach their theory limit and have no idea what to do next. These two players had plans, but they were mixed up with plans from other lines. Some middle-game planning homework is necessary in chess.

12...♗h8 Black is similarly programmed. Just take the bishop! What's he got? Nobody else for White is over there. 12...♗xh6 13.♕xh6 ♕b6.

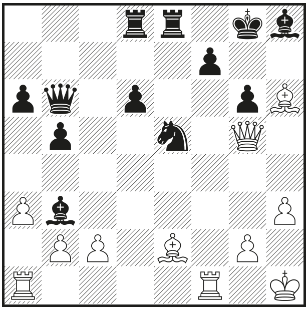
13.f4 b5! Because White allowed this, Black gets a counter-attack.

14.a3 ♕b6+ 15.♔h1 ♖ad8 Two other moves were worthy of consideration: 15...a5, to continue the pawn attack; and 15...♗e6, with the typical Sicilian idea of threatening to mess up White's pawns with and exchange on b3 or even play Bc4 at some point.

16.f5 Again, get all your pieces in the game with ♖ad1.

16...♘e5 17.fxg6 hxg6 Excellent! fxg6 would shatter the integrity of the pawn structure.

18.♘d5 ♘xd5 19.exd5 e6 20.dxe6 ♗xe6 21.♕g5 ♗xb3.

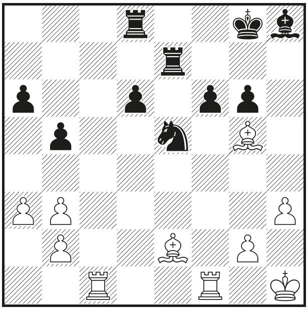


Even though the chess engine shows Black with only a slight advantage after this, the game is won. Black has a passed pawn that's ready to move and White has no attack.

22.cxb3 ♕c7 Black needed to sit down here and think about a general plan involving the passed pawn. He needed to take a calm and objective view of White's "attack". Instead, he wastes moves with the queen rather than doing the obvious and pushing the pawn to d5. Not only would that threaten d4, but it would give the queen access to her own third rank.

23.♖ac1 ♕e7?? Look at the wonderful rank and diagonal influence the queen would have with 23...♕b7 It would even support the d5 move. Unfortunately, the played move is a horrible blunder that comes about because Black didn't look at the consequences of the exchange with the bishop reminding him that the clergy can move backwards. Tactics decide so many amateur games. Give a player a position to find a win and they will most likely not disappoint. In a game, where nobody is telling you that a particular move is a key position, the tactics are often overlooked. You have to develop an every move routine for thinking.

24.♕xe7 ♖xe7 25.♗g5 f6



26.♗xf6?! There's a right way and a wrong way to simplify. Much better was re-evaluating the obvious sequence and looking at a different sequence. 26.♖xf6 ♗xf6 27.♗xf6 ♖de8 28.♗xe7 ♖xe7 29.♖d1 ♖d7 30.a4 and the position is an easy technical win. There's going to be a distant passed pawn, a superior bishop over a knight in an open board and weak black pawns at d6 and g6. Liquidation is best when it reduces the forces. The Bxf6 line would be winning, but it would not be as easy.

> *Young players memorise lines and come in booked-up without a smidgen of understanding as to why they're playing most of the moves... After tournament games today, most young players just leave and head for their computer without even going over the game with their opponent, thus missing out on learning something and maybe even making a lifelong friend*

26...♗xf6 27.♖xf6 ♔g7 White still has the advantage, though a lesser one than he could have had; however, the chosen path to losing is littered with up and coming passive moves by White, while Black turns his king into Attila the Hun.

28.♖f2 d5 29.♗f1 d4 30.♖d2 ♔f6 31.♖cd1 ♖ed7 32.♖f2+ ♔g5 33.♖fd2 ♔f4 34.♔h2 Don't be afraid of ghosts. The black king going to g3 was not a worry.

34...d3 35.g3+ Golden rule of endgames: cut off kings! Then, there are drawing chances, but White will have to work hard to get it. 35.♖e1

35...♔e3 Now it's over, no matter what the rating.

36.♔g2 ♖c7 37.♖f2 ♖c2 38.♖e1+ ♔d4 39.♖xc2 dxc2 40.♖c1 ♘d3 41.♗xd3 ♔xd3 42.♖f1 ♖e8 43.♖f3+ ♖e3 44.♖f1

♔d2 45.♔f2 ♖e8 46.♔f3 ♖f8+ 47.♔g2 ♖xf1 48.♔xf1 c1♕+ 49.♔g2 Really? This has become a disease in recent years. Why is White still playing? A friend of mine long ago, when he had somebody who didn't know when to resign, would take all his opponent's pawns and pieces and advance and promote all his pawns into knights and have them hop around for a while.

49...♔e2 50.b4 ♕f1+ 51.♔h2 ♔f2 52.h4 ♕g2#

0-1

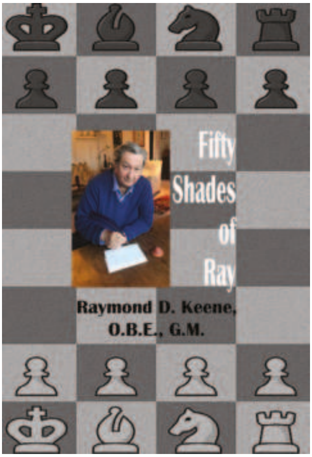
……

This was not an atypical strong amateur game. I am no longer surprised at the lack of understanding of opening theory in players' chosen openings. By understanding, I mean that if your opponent varies, do you know what your opening is about thematically, to deal with the variant? As we saw there is much routine or mechanistic thinking that can take place. Each position is a new position. One little change may beg for a precise response and not just an automatic one. Many don't realise that opening systems have middle game plans. They just know their "ten moves".

Specialist opening books are bought by the thousands. I remember knowing the Marshall Attack 30 moves out. My play became stale because my chess brain was filled up with moves rather than understanding and appreciation of the truths hidden in the positions I was reaching. Time to study for understanding!

CALL TO READERS:
Send us a game you played and found interesting and we'll consider it for publication, with expert analysis! Send the game and the details (who played, when, why is this game important to you and why you want it analysed) to editor@britishchessmagazine.co.uk.

Hardinge Simpole



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Chess in the year of the
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Raymond D. Keene

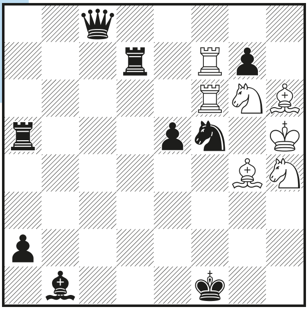
With an Introduction
by CJ de Mooi

PROBLEM WORLD

by Christopher Jones
cjajones1@yahoo.co.uk
Grandmaster of Chess Composition

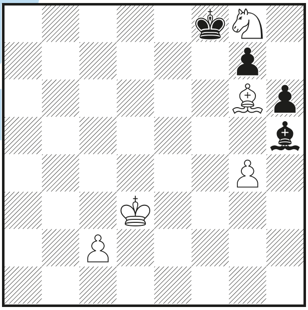
Solutions are given on page 254

1



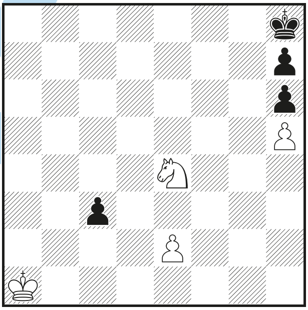
N. Shankar Ram (India)
Reflexmate in 2 (see p.)
ORIGINAL

2



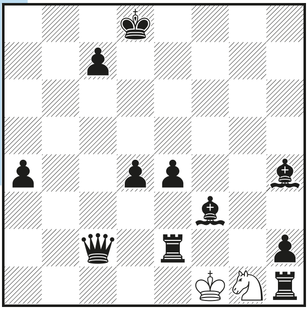
Brian Cook (Chippenham)
Helpmate in 4 (b) bKf8>e5
ORIGINAL *after A. Johandl*

3



Christopher Jones (Bristol)
Helpmate in 5.5 - 2 solutions
ORIGINAL

4



Ljubomir Ugren (Slovenia)
Helpmate in 8
ORIGINAL

SOLUTIONS TO PROBLEMS

This month’s originals

A few words about our first contribution, from a distinguished composer not seen in the pages of BCM for quite some time. This introduces us to the fascinating world of the reflexmate. Readers may be familiar with the idea of the reflexmate’s close cousin, the *selfmate*. In a selfmate, White forces Black (against Black’s will) to mate White. In a *reflexmate* there is an added proviso: both Black and White are obliged to administer mate on the move if they are able to do so. So in Shankar Ram’s problem it appears at first glance that 1.♗g5 may work immediately, compelling Black to play the mating move …♘g3, until you notice that the black knight at f5 is pinned. If you think about making the idea of moving the bishop to g5 work that may help you in solving this one, but otherwise it is well worth reading on to enjoy the solution.

Our other three problems are *helpmates*: collaborative sequences of moves in which Black helps White to administer mate. In Brian’s 4-mover there is one BWBWBWBW sequence in the diagram position, and another one when the black king goes to e5. Rather unusually, both solutions in the third problem begin with white moves, so we have a total of eleven ‘half-moves’ in each solution.

Solving a reflexmate

As I said in the intro, one’s eye is drawn to the idea of getting Black to play …♘g3 mate. The move that seeks to make this plan a reality, 1.♗g5, is indeed the key move, even though the pin on the f-file means that Black can’t play that mating move straight away. White threatens to play 2.♘f4, after which Black would indeed be compelled to play 2…♘g3 mate. There are four defences. First, 1…e4 is cunning; now if 2.♘f4 ♘g3 the black bishop no longer guards g6. However, because the black pawn has moved, 2.♗f4! is now possible, compelling the mating move …♘g3. In the diagram position, ♗f4 would be ineffectual, leaving the white king a flight square at g5. Now, however, it works a treat because 1…e4, as well as closing the line b1-g6, has opened the line a5-h5, so …♘g3 is now a double check, the black rook guarding g5 (and g6 is still blocked by the white knight). So consider 1…♖d3, another move that closes the line b1-g6, but which this time has the flaw of opening the line c8-g4, so that an alternative unpinning move, 2.♗f3!, does the trick. The other two defences are 1…gxf6 2.♗h6! ♘g3 and 1…♕h8+ 2.♗h6 ♕xh6.

Have you been a BCM subscriber for over 35 years? If so, you may have seen Shankar Ram’s earlier (unsound) attempt to show this attractive play in a problem published in Problem World in January 1987!

Helpmate trilogy

In Brian’s four-mover, intricate footwork is necessary to spin a mating web: 1.♗xg4 ♗e4 2.♗f5 ♘e7 3.♗h7 ♘g6+ 4.♔g8 ♗d5. In part (b), the moves are all different, and again the precision required in creating a mating ‘nest’ is appealing - 1.♔f4 ♔d4 2.♔g5 ♗d3 3.♗f7 ♔e4 4.♔g6 ♔f4. In the next problem it is unfortunately not the case that all the moves in the two solutions are different, but there may be compensations. It seems clear that White would like to promote to queen at f8 to give mate, but it turns out that care is needed so that after the c3 pawn has been converted into sacrificial fodder to get the pawn on to the f-file Black on his last move has a spare move and isn’t left only with the option of moving his king, which would disrupt the mate. One line that works is 1…♘d2! 2.cxd2 e4 3.d1=♗ e5

(See page 253)

4.♗xh5 e6 5.♗f7 exf7 because eliminating the white pawn at h5 means that Black can now play 6.h5, allowing 6…f8=♕. The other way to do it may be harder to see. It again involves giving the pawn at h6 a move, and again involves sacrificing the white knight, but this time in a far-sighted way - 1…♘g5! 2.c2 e4 3.c1=♗ e5 4.♗a3 e6 5.♗f8 e7 6.hxg5! exf8=♕.

Finally, another *magnum opus* from Ljubomir! To solve this one you would have not only to visualise the mating position (which entails getting black pieces to c8, d7 and e8) but also to visualise how to do so in a way that accommodates the fact that the two white pieces have so little room for manoeuvre. The line of play that uniquely solves the conundrum involves a lot of opening and closing of lines. We have to spend the first two moves of the solution just getting the black rook from e2 to d2, whence it will get to d7, after the white knight has opened the d2-d7 line. Even after the white knight has inveigled its way to d4 it has to go back again to e2, before it can eventually emerge again to administer mate on c6 - 1.♖f2+ ♔e1 2.♖d2+ ♔f1 3.♗e2+ ♔g2 4.♕c6 ♘f3 5.♕e8 ♘xd4 6.♗a6+ ♘e2 7.♖d7 ♘d4 8.♗c8 ♘c6.

SOLUTIONS TO ENDGAMES (See page 246)

Vilner

1.♗g6 e1♕ 2.♖h1 ♕xh1 3.♗xe4+ ♕xe4 stalemate.

Gorgiev

1.b4 axb4 2.♘d3 c2 3.♗xc2 ♔h5 4.♘e1 ♗b6 5.♘g2 ♗d8 6.♗d1 ♗xh4 7.♔e3+ ♔g5 8.♔f3 b3 9.♗xb3 ♔h5 10.♗f7+ ♔g5 11.♗e8 wins.

Bondarenko

1.♘f3 ♔b7 2.♖e8 a1♕ 3.♖xe7+ ♔c6 4.♖e6+ ♔d5 5.♖e5+ ♔c4 6.♖e4+ ♔d3 7.♖e3+ ♔c2 8.♖e2+ perpetual check._

Halberstadt

1.♔a3 ♔c6 2.♔a2 ♔b6 3.♘c7 ♘f6 4.♘d5+ wins.

Lots of squares are ‘mined’ by potential knight checks: 1.♔c4? ♘+ and …♘g6 or 1.♔a4? ♘c5+ and …♘e6 threatening …♔c6 and …♔d7 or 1.♔c3? ♔c5 2.♘d6 ♘f6 3.♘e4+ ♘xe4+ or 2.♔d2 ♔d4 and …♔e5 or 1.♔b3? ♘c5+ 2.♔c4 ♘e6 3.♘f6 ♘g7 4.♔d5 ♔c7 5.♔e5 ♔c6. In the main line, 2.♔b2? ♘b6 3.♘d6 ♘c4+ 4.♘xc4 ♔d7 or here 3.♘f6 ♘c4+ 4.♔c3 ♘d6 5.♔d4 ♘e8 6.♔e5 ♘g7.

If Black plays 1…♔a7 his king must stay on b8 or a7 and we get: 2.♔b2 ♔b8 3.♔c2 ♔a7 4.♔d2 ♔b8 5.♔e2 ♔a7 6.♔f3 ♔b8 7.♔g3 ♔a7 8.♔f4 ♔b6 9.♔f5 ♔c6 10.♘f6 or here 8…♔b8 9.♔f5 ♔a7 10.♘f6.

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